

# **Bolsheviks Against Stalinism 1928–1933**



**Leon Trotsky and  
the Left Opposition  
Vadim Z. Rogovin**



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Right (from top): Trotsky, Rakovsky, Sedov, Sosnovsky, Gaven.

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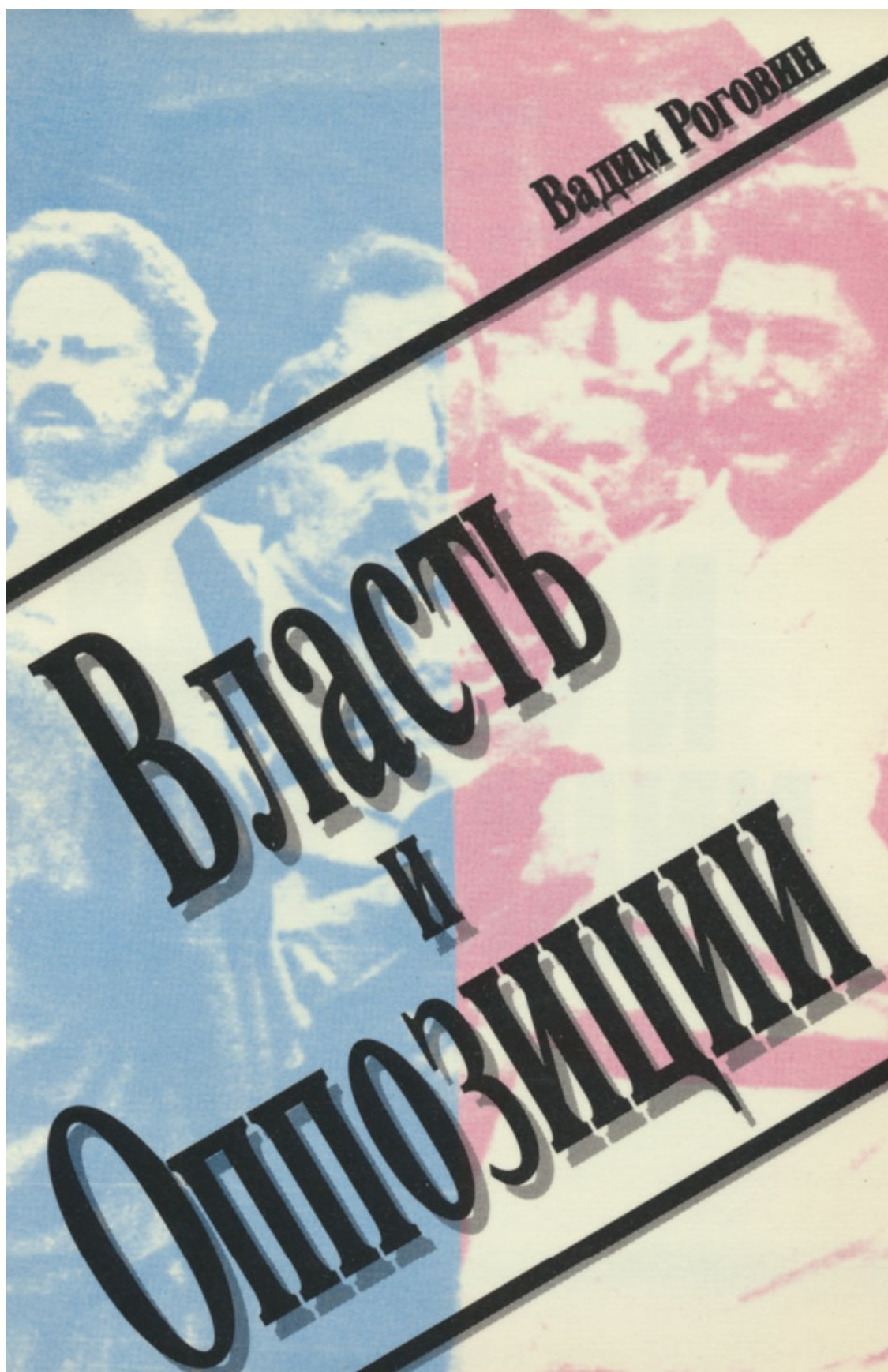


## About the Author

Vadim Zakharovich Rogovin (10 May 1937–18 September 1998) was a Doctor of Philosophical Sciences and leading researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. He is the author of 250 scholarly works, including eight monographs on problems of social policy, the history of social thought and the history of political movements in the former USSR. From 1991 to 1998, Rogovin wrote a seven-volume study, *Was There an Alternative?*, which examined the struggle of the Left Opposition, led by Leon Trotsky, against the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet regime. This book is the second volume in the series.

Before his untimely death in September 1998, Rogovin presented lectures all over the world about the socialist-based opposition to the Stalinist regime.





*The Russian edition of Vadim Rogovin,  
Vlast' i oppozitsii, Moskva: Tovarishestvo "Zhurnal 'Teatr,'" 1993.*



# Foreword

This book was published by Vadim Rogovin in Moscow in the fall of 1993, slightly less than two years after the Soviet Union had been dissolved. It is the second volume of what would become a seven-volume study of the struggle of the Left Opposition, both inside the Soviet Union and abroad, as it fought the Stalinist degeneration of the workers' state established after the October Revolution in 1917.

The first volume raises the question: "Was There an Alternative to Stalinism?" It studies the rise of the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky in 1923, and ends with the expulsion of Trotsky and his supporters at the Fifteenth Party Congress in 1927. The succeeding volumes examine the history of the resistance to Stalinism up through Trotsky's assassination in August 1940 and the outbreak of World War II.

Rogovin began collecting material about the inner-party struggle as a teenager, soon after Stalin's death in 1953. During the "Thaw" in 1956, signaled by Khrushchev's famous secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in February, Rogovin's hopes were raised that a true history of this period could be written. But Khrushchev's de-Stalinization was partial; many of the most odious falsifications of history remained.

After Khrushchev's fall in 1964, relatively bleak years dominated on the historical front. Trotsky's name was taboo. None of his works were readily available in the Soviet Union, and Rogovin could not assume that he would ever be able to publish the history he yearned to write.

After Gorbachev began the process of "perestroika" in 1985, one of the slogans of that time was "glasnost" (openness). Official Communist Party publications started to publish documents of previously banned topics in Soviet history. Soon a flood of these documents was published in journals, newspapers, and books, often in enormous press runs (the relatively obscure newspaper, *Arguments and Facts*, reached a press run of 33 million!).

Rogovin devoured this material, thoroughly assimilated it, and began to write his volumes with incredible honesty, courage and speed. By 1991, the first volume appeared. By 1992, Rogovin was able to begin collaborating with members of the International Committee of the Fourth International. This collaboration was crucial, since many of Rogovin's former colleagues and friends were abandoning Marxism and renouncing the entire history of the Soviet Union. Rogovin, on the contrary, eagerly sought interlocutors who were approaching this history from a Marxist perspective. He found them both in Moscow and abroad, as he delivered lectures based on his research in London, Glasgow, the United States, Australia and Germany.

In May 1994, Rogovin was diagnosed with cancer. The prognosis was not good — he was initially given six months to live. Despite this tragic news, Rogovin continued to lecture and write in a way that astounded his oncologists, family, and newly found collaborators. Rogovin worked assiduously until virtually the day before he died, on 18 September 1998.

Rogovin's achievement as a historian is monumental. He was not able to see many of the volumes of documents that have appeared in the former Soviet Union since his death. These include thousands of pages on the NEP; the inner-party struggle; collectivization and industrialization; the Comintern; the Great Terror; and the outbreak of war. Yet what he wrote, based on what he managed to see and use in his analysis of these complex events, stands the test of time. Although published in Russian in 1993, little in this book needs to be changed to be historically accurate.

Given the new socialist wave that Rogovin felt was inevitable, he called for a profound understanding of the historical lessons of the past, in order to avoid fatal mistakes in the coming political battles. This requires a study of the political and ideological heritage of Marxists of the 1930s, many of whom are unknown to the readers Rogovin anticipated, but whose history assumes urgent significance today.

To aid the reader, brief biographies of many of these Marxists have been appended to the book. More volumes are planned to appear in English, joining the two others that have already been published by Mehring Books.



# Notes from the Translator

Transliterating Russian names and other words from Cyrillic always involves compromises. Throughout the main body of the text, I have adopted a modified version of the system used in the *Handbook of Russian Literature* (edited by Victor Terras, Yale University Press, 1985). Thus, the familiar “-skii” ending of many surnames is rendered as “-sky.” Soft and hard signs are omitted (Raskolnikov, not Raskol’nikov), except in footnotes. Where names are of German origin, I have usually retained the Russian form (Goltsman, not Holtzmann). Other names that have been popularized over the years are used in their more familiar form, even if this violates strict transliteration norms (Zinoviev, not Zinov’ev; Barmine, not Barmin; Nicolaevsky, not Nikolaevsky). Names that begin with the Cyrillic “Е”, “Ю” or “Я” are rendered as “Ye” (Yezhov), “Yu” (Yudin) or “Ya” (Yaroslavsky). Names in the index usually include the patronymic, unless it could not be found.

A glossary of many of the acronyms and terms from the Soviet period follows the last chapter. For brevity’s sake, I have used some of these terms in the text (e.g., Gosplan, kolkhoz), even though they might seem strange to the non-Russian reader.

When it comes to territorial terms, I have left several in transliterated form, while adding them to the glossary (*oblast*, *okrug*, *krai*), since there is no consistent equivalent to territories in English-speaking countries.

Where appropriate, I designate economic years in the following way: 1928/1929, which is explained in the glossary.

Vadim Rogovin often inserted parenthetical comments, signed with his initials. I have retained them in parentheses. All unsigned notes in square brackets belong to the translator, not to the author. –  
*F. C.*

# Introduction

For what is now half a century, historians, political scientists, and sociologists around the world have continually been seeking an answer to the question that remains the most complex historical riddle of the twentieth century: Why, on the ground prepared by the October Revolution, did there appear a phenomenon such as Stalinism? Its natural consequences were stagnation, and then the modern-day, all-embracing socio-economic and socio-political crisis that seized the decaying Soviet Union and other countries of the former “socialist commonwealth.”

In Soviet and foreign historical and political literature, two fundamentally different answers to this question are offered. One of them stems from the idea that Stalinism and post-Stalinism were the natural and inevitable result of the implementation of Marxist doctrine and the revolutionary practice of Bolshevism. The second is based on the idea that Stalinism was the product of a massive bureaucratic reaction to the October Revolution, and represented not a continuation, but rather the total negation and destruction of the principles of Bolshevism. A peculiarity of the counter-revolution carried out by Stalin and his accomplices was that it took place under the ideological cover of Marxist phraseology and never-ending vows of loyalty to the October Revolution.

Naturally, such a counter-revolution demanded a historically unprecedented piling up of lies and falsifications. It required the fabrication of ever-newer myths. However, a no-less-developed mythology is demanded to support the position advanced today by those who believe that the socialist choice of our people in 1917 was a false one. They identify Stalinism, as a system of social relations, with socialism; and Stalinism, as a political and ideological force, with Bolshevism. The more clearly Soviet society recoils from the conquests of the October Revolution toward backward, semi-colonial capitalism, and the more wide-scale and painful the destructive consequences of this process prove to be, the more actively views of this sort are propagated.

Like the Stalinists, modern-day anti-communists use two kinds of myths: ideological and historical. By ideological myths we mean false ideas, directed at the future — that is, illusory prognoses and promises. Such products of false consciousness reveal their mythological character only to the extent that they are implemented in practice. Myths that appeal not to the future but to the past are another matter. In principle, it is easier to expose these myths than anti-scientific prognoses and reactionary projections. Both ideological and historical myths are a product of immediate class interests. But in contrast to the former, the latter are products, not of political error or conscious deception of the masses, but of historical ignorance or indubitable falsification — that is, the concealment of some historical facts or the tendentious exaggeration and distorted interpretation of others. These myths may be refuted by restoring historical truth — the honest presentation of actual facts and tendencies of the past.

Unfortunately, in recent years the representatives of the ideological currents defending the socialist choice have not utilized the entire aggregate of historical facts that allow one to debunk the newest

historical mythology. As a rule, they conclude their analysis of the fate of the socialist idea and its practical implementation in the USSR by referring to Lenin's last works. However, Lenin's political activity was interrupted precisely at that historical moment when the Soviet Union had only just emerged from the first extreme stages of its development — the civil war and the monstrous post-war destruction; a time when the possibilities of peaceful socialist construction had just begun, and also when the contours had just become visible of the new danger threatening socialist development in an isolated and backward country — the Thermidorian degeneration of the October Revolution.

After the death of Lenin, Bolshevism split into two irreconcilable political tendencies: Stalinism and the Left Opposition ("Bolshevik-Leninists," as they called themselves, or "Trotskyists," according to the Stalinists). In the 1920s, the Left Opposition was the only current to advance a program in opposition to Stalinism on all essential questions of the world communist movement and the building of socialism in the USSR. It developed and enriched, on the basis of new historical experience, ideas about the ways to make the transition from capitalism to socialism, about the new economic policy, and about the resolution of the national question in the USSR, which had only begun to be elaborated in the works of Lenin.

Precisely because Stalinism was not the continuation, but the negation of Bolshevism, it engaged in a fierce struggle against this mass movement in the party, which advanced and substantiated a genuinely socialist alternative for the development of Soviet society, and defended the political, ideological, and moral principles of the October Revolution. These principles were being destroyed by the bureaucratic apparatus — the main social buttress of the Stalinist regime.

After the Left Opposition had been driven out of the party in 1927, legal inner-party political struggle became impossible. The activity of the Bukharin group inside the Politburo and Central Committee, which ended in 1929 with a total capitulation to Stalin, was the last attempt at open resistance to the consolidation of Stalinism. However, the struggle of inner-party oppositions against Stalinism continued for many years. Of course, the struggle unfolded in different forms than in the previous decade. Open party discussions on questions of domestic and international policy had come to an end. The activity of the new oppositions emerging inside the party were illegal. Their participants were subjected to not only party sanctions, but also brutal police persecution.

Throughout the first half of the 1930s, the most active oppositional force in the communist movement continued to be Trotsky, who was in exile, and his Soviet co-thinkers, who were active either in the underground, or in Stalinist prisons, camps, and deportation.

In the 1930s, the Left Opposition made the most significant contribution to Marxist theory, inasmuch as its works contained a scientific analysis of the first experience with socialist construction in history, albeit one realized with distorted methods of bureaucratic command over the working masses. Exposing the gigantic costs of these methods (characteristic not only of the 1930s, but of all subsequent periods of Soviet development), Trotsky and his associates proved that with the democratization of political life and the carrying out of social policies corresponding to the interests, not of narrow privileged groups, but the broad popular masses, it would have been possible not only

to avoid colossal human losses and the sharp lowering of the people's living standards, but also to achieve much more effective economic results.

The period under consideration in this book was a time when new oppositions composed of former Bukharinists and Stalinists arrived at "Trotskyist" ideas. This process concluded in 1932 with an attempt to unite the old and new oppositional groups inside the party.

In this book we attempt to trace the history of the inner-party struggles of 1928–1933, comparing the following fundamental types of sources: official "party documents" (decisions of congresses and plenums of the Central Committee, the speeches of Stalin and his accomplices, Stalinist propaganda); memoirs of the participants in political life of those years; Soviet archival material that exposes important aspects of historical events hidden from contemporaries; and oppositional documents, a large portion of which are unknown to the Soviet reader.

Familiarity with these documents convinces one that everything which is correct in contemporary criticism of Stalinism was already said by the Bolshevik opposition from the end of the 1920s to the beginning of the 1930s. In addition, one encounters many conclusions in the documents of these opposition groups that are missing from contemporary historical works, and that in their entirety represent a systematic alternative to Stalinism in the economic, social, political, and intellectual spheres.

The development of the inner-party struggle during these years cannot be considered in isolation from the fate of world capitalism, whose deep and universal crisis, having begun in 1914, assumed particularly sharp forms from 1929–1933. The change from the unstable post-war "prosperity" into the "great depression" which shook the entire capitalist world, was the most convincing refutation of arguments that the Bolsheviks, having viewed the October Revolution as a prologue to proletarian and national-liberation revolutions in other countries, overestimated the depth of the global contradictions of capitalism. However, the structural crisis of the entire capitalist system, having assumed an unprecedented scale, did not end in the victory of socialist revolutions, inasmuch as the revolutionary movement was betrayed and wrecked from within. The theory of "the victory of socialism in one country" led to the transformation of the Comintern and its affiliated communist parties from a revolutionary force into a means of guaranteeing foreign political conditions favorable for development of the USSR. The defeat of the German workers' movement was the clearest evidence of the revolutionary possibilities missed at the start of the 1930s by the Stalinized Comintern. The sectarian errors of the German Communist Party, which blocked the creation of a united, anti-fascist workers' front in Germany, opened the road to power for Hitler, who took advantage of the intolerable conditions in which the German people found themselves as a result of the rapacious Versailles Treaty — one of the ugliest products of imperialism.

Instead of being the leading force spurring other peoples to struggle for socialism, the Soviet Union increasingly had a negative impact, repelling wide layers of workers in the capitalist countries from the communist movement. This played no small role in the defeat of revolutionary forces in the West. Along with this, the weakening of capitalism in the 1930s was the factor that allowed Stalin to



not only preserve but strengthen his position in the international arena. Thus, the world capitalist crisis, which confirmed the correctness of Marxist theory and Bolshevik strategy, objectively contributed to the consolidation of Stalinism.

The critical sharpening of the contradictions of world capitalism coincided chronologically with the extreme sharpening of social tensions in the USSR as a result of forced collectivization.

The time for systematic reforms of a genuinely socialist character was lost in 1923–1927, when the party was continuously infected with the fever of the “struggle against Trotskyism,” imposed on it by the unscrupulous ruling bloc. All of Stalin’s statements and actions in the field of socio-economic policy during this time bore an externally “measured” character. This was dictated above all by his striving to present the ideas of his ideological opponents as the promoters of a new civil war. On the basis of the social moods generated by these false conceptions, he sought to cast his opponents out of the leadership and drive them out of the party. Having accomplished this goal, Stalin had a free hand to carry out adventurist zigzags in domestic and foreign policy, and the mass repressions associated with them, which from year to year became ever more widespread and ruthless.

At the time of the ultra-left turn in domestic policy that took place on the cusp of the 1930s, Stalin did not have a thought-out political strategy rooted in a realistic evaluation of the situation in the country and an appraisal of the scale of the resistance that the peasantry might offer to forced collectivization. A. Avtorkhanov correctly notes that at the time Stalin delivered his report “On the Grain Front,” in which collectivization was declared the singular method for the state procurement of grain, Stalin “himself could hardly have imagined how this would all turn out concretely and what the costs of this complex process would be.”<sup>1</sup>

Stalin’s policy of 1929–1933 was a series of unceasing empirical zigzags, from adventurist “offensives” to panicked retreats, from administrative pressure to economic concessions to the popular masses, and then back again to whipping up a “state of emergency” atmosphere in the country. Stalin ended up on the verge of a total political catastrophe more than once, as a result of these zigzags. In one of the rare moments in which he was open about himself, he acknowledged that the struggle with the peasantry was an ordeal more terrible for him than even World War II. Churchill’s memoirs record his conversation with Stalin on 15 August 1942. “Tell me,” Churchill asked Stalin, “have the stresses of this war been as difficult for you personally as carrying through the policy of collectivization?” “Well, no,” replied Stalin, “the policy of collectivization was a terrible struggle.” “I thought you would have found it bad,” Churchill responded, “because you were not dealing with several thousands of aristocrats or big landowners, but with millions of small men.” “With tens of millions,” Stalin said, raising his hands. “It was something terrible. It lasted four years.”<sup>2</sup>

For a correct understanding of the upheavals of forced collectivization, it is important above all to have a scientific conception of the social and political essence of Stalinism. This essence is best encapsulated in the notion of “bureaucratic centrism,” which characterizes the policy, not just of Stalin, but of all subsequent leaders in the party. Although official Soviet propaganda indefatigably insisted that “the party is armed with the most advanced scientific theory,” from the end of the 1920s

onward, Marxist phraseology served as ideological camouflage for the ruling clique's exceptionally empiricist political course.

Calling Stalin an empiricist, Trotsky repeatedly stressed that Stalin never possessed a theoretically developed strategic plan and an ability to foresee the short-term, and even more so, the long-term consequences of his policy. In the elaboration of his tactics he never began from theory and strategy, but rather subordinated theory and strategy to tactical goals dictated by the collision with immediate and unforeseen difficulties to which his unsystematic and scientifically-groundless policy brought him.

Stalin's pragmatic policy, masked with abstract socialist language, underwent sharp fluctuations. In periods of relative stability in the country's domestic and foreign affairs, bureaucratic centrism set out from an opportunistic striving to preserve the status quo in the international arena and to maintain prevailing social relations inside the country. In periods of crisis, it shifted to an eclectic policy of casting about between political extremes.

Gorbachev's "perestroika," which can justifiably be called "collectivization inside out," was a peculiar parallel of the Stalinist policy of the "great turning point." Carried out, like "complete collectivization," without a clear strategic plan, scientific conception, or clear notion of the goals and consequences of the planned transformations, "perestroika" had consequences for the fate of the Soviet people and all mankind that were no less disastrous than Stalin's "socialist offensive on all fronts."

In 1928–1933, crude empiricism in policy drove the economy from one crisis to the next. Stalin invariably explained these crises, which emerged as the result of a mistaken political line, as a product of the growing resistance of class enemies. The method chosen for getting out of the crises was a policy of "emergency measures," administrative pressure, and brutal repression applied to ever wider layers of the population. Attempting to be rescued from economic difficulties with these policies, Stalin embarked on a struggle against the kulaks, which grew into a frontal confrontation with the entire peasantry, essentially provoking the latter into a new civil war.

When describing the Stalinist repressions, both in official Soviet and in anti-communist historiography, albeit for different reasons, the accent usually falls on the fact that they were all carried out against "rabbits" (to use Alexander Solzhenitsyn's expression). However, in reality, neither the White Guard conspirators continuing to struggle with all methods and means for the restoration of capitalism throughout the 1920s and 1930s; nor peasants responding to forced collectivization with mass uprisings; nor Bolshevik oppositionists fighting against Stalin in the name of restoring socialist principles, were such "rabbits." Stalin provocatively united all these forces, whose thoughts and actions were of a profoundly heterogeneous character, into a single amalgam under the label "enemies of the people."

In foreign and contemporary Soviet historical literature, the state terror unleashed by Stalin at the end of the 1920s is frequently regarded as a natural continuation of the Bolsheviks' struggle against opponents of the October Revolution in the years of the civil war. Such an identification consciously

conceals the fundamental differences in the scale, function, and objectives of the political repressions in the Leninist versus the Stalinist epochs. The repressions at the time of the civil war were carried out by the Bolsheviks with the active support of the masses, under conditions in which the party and its leaders shared the people's sacrifices and deprivations. The blows were delivered against forces of the old regime, which had at their command superbly equipped and organized armies that had received enormous material and financial aid from abroad. The immediate military actions against the White Armies were accompanied by a struggle against conspiracies in the rear (at the time of civil wars, the dividing line separating the front from the rear is usually relative), which served the same goal — counter-revolutionary restoration — that is, the restoration of the privileges of the former ruling classes in Tsarist Russia. In contrast, “the terror of the 1930s was the guardian of inequality. By its very character, it was anti-popular; and being potentially or actually directed against the majority, it was total and indiscriminate.” From the beginning of collectivization, the unleashing of a gigantic repressive state mechanism “led to constant injections of such monstrous doses of fear into such a vast part of the social organism that the whole body was inevitably poisoned. Once the machine of terror, far more massive than anything hitherto seen, was mounted and set in motion, it developed its own inertia which did not submit to control.”<sup>3</sup>

Immediately after the end of the civil war in 1922, political repressions declined sharply. In the mid-1920s, the number of inmates in Soviet prisons and camps did not exceed 100,000 to 150,000 people. Of this number, just a few hundred were sentenced for political reasons. From 1928, the population of the camps began to grow steadily, reaching a half million people in 1934. More than a quarter of this number were political prisoners.

Stalin's repressive campaigns flowed from his fear not only of the peasantry, but of the working class and above all, its revolutionary vanguard — the Left Opposition. The ever-growing wave of mass violence was directed not against enemies of the October Revolution, but against enemies that the Stalinist regime itself created: the peasantry resisting forced collectivization and participants in the communist oppositions.

With his adventurist policy in the field of economics and with mass repressions, Stalin continually added to the initial enemies of Soviet power ever more thousands of its actual and potential opponents, who equated socialism with the Stalinist regime.

Simultaneously with blows against the peasantry — the most massive force of resistance to the Stalinist regime — brutal blows were meted out against communists “guilty” of vacillation, or, on the contrary, against those who carried out the policies dictated by Stalin with consistency and zeal. A permanent feature of Stalin's rule consisted of assigning responsibility for the failures of his political course to those who carried it out.

Rather than guarding against further economic disasters, the mass repressions laid the groundwork for them. Adventuristic and arbitrary decisions were fulfilled only partially and at an unjustifiably high price. Thus, forced collectivization not only utterly exhausted the productive forces of the village, but actually impeded the development of industry.

If the Soviet regime survived the start of the 1930s, it was not thanks to Stalin's leadership, but in spite of it. The victory of Stalin and the bureaucracy he led in the civil war against the peasantry can be explained by the fact that the working class opposed the restoration of capitalist relations, which would have led inevitably to the victory of a "Russian Vendée." Because of this, the working class supported the bureaucracy in the latter's convulsive struggle with the peasant masses. Moreover, in these years the cities experienced less of the repressions, which came down primarily on the rural population. And finally, not a small role was played by the fact that in this period Stalin formed a social base of support for his regime, in the form of privileged layers that included, in addition to the ruling bureaucracy, the labor aristocracy and upper-echelon intelligentsia.

Nonetheless, Stalin's position toward the end of the period under consideration in this book was extremely precarious. With his policy, he came into conflict with all of Soviet society's classes and social groups, including even a significant portion of the ruling bureaucracy. Despite Stalin's apparent triumph in the struggle against his political opponents, a significant portion of the Bolsheviks did not regard his victory as final. The attempted formation in 1932 of a bloc composed of representatives of all the anti-Stalinist oppositions is evidence of this.

The complex upheavals of the inner-party struggle of 1928–1933 will be the primary subject under consideration in our book.

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[1.](#) A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiia vlasti* [The Technology of Power], M., 1991, p. 11.

[2.](#) *Vtoraia mirovaia voina v vospominaniakh U. Cherkhillia, Sharliia de Gollia, K. Khella, U. Legi, D. Eizenkhauera* [The Second World War in the Memoirs of Winston Churchill, Charles de Gaulle, Cordell Hull, William Leahy, and Dwight Eisenhower], M., 1990, pp. 178–179.

[3.](#) I. Doicher [Isaac Deutscher], *Izgnanie Trotskogo* [Trotsky's Exile], M., 1991, p. 177 [Cf. Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast*, p. 110].



ПРОЛЕТАРИИ ВСЕХ СТРАН, СОЕДИНЯЙТЕСЬ!



**ХV СЪЕЗД  
ВСЕСОЮЗНОЙ  
КОММУНИСТИЧЕСКОЙ  
ПАРТИИ-(Б)**



**СТЕНОГРАФИЧЕСКИЙ  
ОТЧЕТ**



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ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО

*Transcript of the Fifteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (b), held in December of 1927. The text, 1,416 pages long, was published by the State Publishing House in 1928 in 100,000 copies.*

# 1. The Economic Crisis of 1927

The ruling faction's decision in 1925–1927 to embark on a course of farmer-capitalist development quickly proved to be unsustainable. Despite the growth of grain reserves among prosperous layers of the peasantry, because of the goods shortages and the absence of industrial products to offer the village, the government encountered ever more serious difficulties in securing the grain necessary to provision the cities and meet export-import plans.

The first to pay attention to this problem in the Politburo was Bukharin, who at the end of 1927 identified two “fatal problems” facing the party. In his words, the problem of grain procurements and the problem of capital investments in heavy industry would be “agonizing and extremely urgent over the next 15 years.”<sup>1</sup> It was Bukharin who advanced the slogan of “forced pressure on the kulak” at the Fifteenth Congress in December. This slogan was included in the Central Committee's theses presented for the pre-Congress discussion.

The opposition's counter-theses to the Fifteenth Congress noted:

“Finally — with a delay of more than two years — the Central Committee pronounces the slogan of pressure on the kulak and NEPman. This slogan, if it is taken seriously, presupposes a change of the entire policy, a regroupment of forces, a new orientation for all state organs... After all, neither the kulak, on the one hand, nor the poor peasant, on the other, have forgotten that over the course of two years the Central Committee has been defending an entirely different policy. It is completely obvious that, by remaining silent about their previous directive, the authors of the theses proceed from the idea that in order to change a policy it is enough to issue a new ‘order.’”<sup>2</sup>

The opposition emphasized that in order to hide its own political bankruptcy, the ruling faction attempted to explain the necessity of “forced pressure” on the kulak and the NEPman by blaming the “weaknesses” of these layers.

The opposition's pre-Congress documents identified the basic factors leading to the imminent economic crisis: the deficit of industrial goods as a consequence of the slow development of industrialization; the accumulation of grain reserves in the hands of the upper layers of the village as a result of growing social stratification; the ruling faction's attempt to escape economic difficulties by issuing paper money divorced from production.

Having secured the “monolithic” composition of the Fifteenth Congress, the Stalin-Bukharin faction not only replaced a discussion of the opposition's documents with crude, unbridled abuse. It concealed even from the Congress delegates the fact that up to that moment (December 1927), the planned grain procurements had fallen 42 percent compared to the same period the previous year. Nor did the delegates know that, on the eve of the Congress, the Politburo held several meetings where it discussed measures to overcome the grain-procurement crisis, which threatened to exceed in scale and consequences the analogous “fall delays” of 1925 and to endanger the cities with a grain blockade.<sup>3</sup>



By this time, the opposition's prognoses about an intensifying disproportion between the development of industry and agriculture, and about the growth of inflation that had taken the form of a chronic goods shortage, had been entirely confirmed. However, this did not prompt the Politburo to methodically change its policy in the spirit of the Left Opposition's demands. In his report to the Congress, Stalin rejected its statements and warnings, by declaring that under conditions of industrialization, the advanced tempo of production of the means of production in comparison with production of consumer goods inevitably makes unavoidable "elements of a goods shortage in the coming years." In this regard, he charged members of the Left Opposition with "gathering material for their ideology in speculators' lines and yelling about a goods shortage, while demanding 'super-industrialization' at the same time. But this is nonsense, comrades."<sup>4</sup>

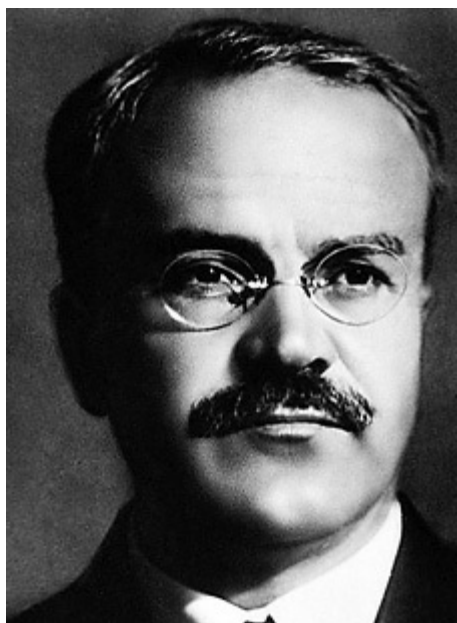
Just as stubbornly, the Stalin-Bukharin leadership ignored the Left Opposition's warnings about the sharpening of the grain problem as a result of the increasing economic power and influence of the kulak. At the Fifteenth Congress, Molotov declared, with Stalin's support, that the Left Opposition's proposal for a mandatory loan of 150–200 million poods of grain from the wealthiest 10 percent of peasant households was a disruption of NEP policy. "Those who now propose to us this policy of a forced loan, no matter how much this proposal is filled with good intentions," said Molotov, "are enemies of the workers and peasants, enemies of the union of workers and peasants (Stalin: Correct!)."<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the Politburo submitted to the congress a program of the partial transformation of NEP, including a transition to the technological reconstruction of the entire national economy, increased planning in the direction of the economy, and restriction of capitalist elements in the cities and villages. All of these ideas, as well as some practical measures implemented in the prelude to the congress, such as the cancellation of agrarian taxes for 35 percent of the peasant households (the weakest, poorest layers of the villages), were, in essence, taken from the opposition platform.

The ruling faction also introduced certain changes in the draft of the Five-Year Plan, the first version of which proposed extremely low tempos of industrial development. This was explained by its authors as the necessary observance of proportionality between accumulation and consumption, disavowing "the maximum tempo of accumulation." However, according to this variant of the plan, per capita personal consumption was expected to grow by just 12 percent over the course of five years. The extreme timidity of this conception of the Five-Year Plan expressed itself most sharply in the fact that, by its conclusion, the state budget was expected to make up just 16 percent of national income, whereas even in Tsarist Russia it made up 18 percent. Trotsky subsequently noted that "the engineers and economists who drew up this plan were some years later severely judged and punished by law as conscious saboteurs acting under the direction of foreign powers. The accused might have answered, had they dared, that their work on planning corresponded perfectly to the 'general line' of the Politburo at the time and was carried out under its orders."<sup>6</sup>

In Stalinist literature devoted to party history, the Fifteenth Congress has been called the congress of collectivization. However, this definition does not adequately characterize the content of this

congress. Inasmuch as it was entirely directed at “finishing off” the opposition, the discussion of the impending changes in agrarian policy occupied second place. The idea of collectivization in Stalin’s



*Viacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov*  
(1890–1986)

summary report, in the reports by Rykov and Molotov (about directives on drawing up a Five-Year Plan of economic development and about work in the village), and in resolutions based on these reports was formulated as policy of an indeterminate, long-term perspective. “We know,” said Molotov, “that the development of individual households along the path to socialism is a slow path, a long path. Many years are required in order to transition from individual to social (collective) economy... We know well that the NEP — the so-called “new economic policy” — was a concession to the middle peasant, the small proprietor, the small owner, who still prefers individual farming to collective farming. We have held on to this policy,

we are holding on to this policy, and we will hold on to it so long as the small-scale peasant farming exists.”<sup>7</sup> This approach left the question of the time period and methods of collectivization entirely open.

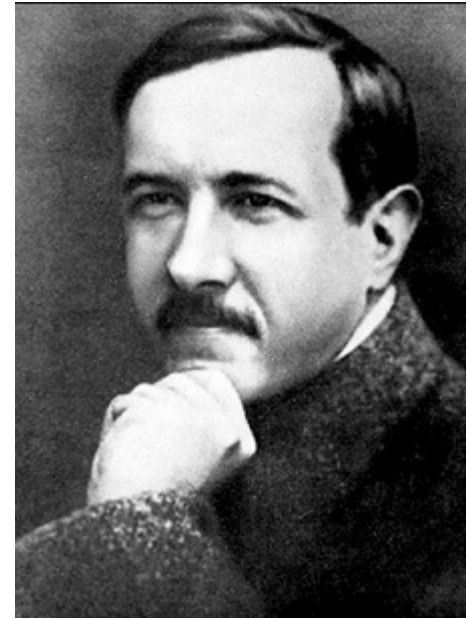
Meanwhile, Molotov, who headed the commission to prepare theses on work in the village, had at his disposal the designs of leading scholar-agronomists, including the director of the Scientific Research Institute of Agricultural Economics and Policy, Aleksandr V. Chayanov. In a note to Molotov, Chayanov stressed that, as a result of the liquidation of highly-productive landowner and large kulak farms, agriculture had begun to base itself to an even greater degree than before the revolution on production of a pre-capitalist family type, with tightly “bound interrelationships in the leasing and borrowing of inventory and stock animals.” After the introduction of NEP, which created space for the development of market relations in the village, in this mass of “smaller, but relatively equal-sized households,” processes of capitalist differentiation of the individual-farming variety again began to show themselves. Although these processes were restrained to a significant degree by the state’s social policy, nonetheless they unleashed elemental market conditions in the village that threatened the degeneration of the pre-capitalist family-forms of peasant agriculture into farming households, and as a consequence, a change in the social basis of agrarian production. Chayanov rejected the views of those economists who regarded such an evolution to be the most desirable means of raising the productive forces of agriculture. He was convinced that it was entirely possible to promote the quantitative accumulation of the socialist elements in the village along the following lines: credit, purchasing, sales, subsidiary enterprises, the organization of the primary reworking of village production, the organization of cooperative tillage of the land, and the socialization of several



sectors of the village economy. In his opinion, such a line of development could oppose individual farming-type tendencies and create a system of social-cooperative agriculture that could gradually replace individual parcels with large enterprises of a collective-farm type.<sup>8</sup>

However, such a realistic program of gradual collectivization of agriculture did not exist for Molotov, who did not see collectivization as an urgent task of the party's socio-economic policy. "We cannot, of course, forget," he repeated in his closing words to the congress, "that in the coming years our agriculture will develop mainly as a mass of small peasant farms."<sup>9</sup>

Nothing at the congress foretold a radical change in the party's policy toward the kulak. Molotov even indirectly criticized "from the right" the Bukharinist slogan of an "intensified offensive" against the kulak when he declared that "this formula says nothing new."<sup>10</sup> As Molotov maintained, "the fundamental lever" in the offensive against capitalist elements in the village lay in the state convincing the middle peasant and stimulating "elements" of large-scale collective agriculture. Molotov's report contained numerous warnings against employing force; it issued calls for "discretion, caution, deliberation, gradualness, and so forth."<sup>11</sup> However justified these general arguments may have been, they testified to the absence in the ruling faction of a clear program for transforming the countryside, where the most acute contradictions of the country's economic and social development intersected. This, above all else, explains the subsequent tragic events caused by the stunning and impetuous shift from a "cautious" and "unhurried" policy to an ultra-left, adventuristic course.



*Aleksandr Vasilievich Chayanov*  
(1888–1937)

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1. N. I. Bukharin, *Osnovnye zadachi partii* [Basic Tasks of the Party], M., 1927, pp. 37, 45.

2. *Pravda*, 17 November 1927.

3. See *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1990, № 3, p. 69.

4. *XV s"ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov)*. *Stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. I, 1962, p. 66.

5. *XV s"ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov)*. *Stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. II, 1962, p. 1222.

6. L. D. Trotskii, *Predannaia revoliutsiia*, M., 1991, p. 30 [Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, Labor Publications, 1991, p. 28].

7. *XV s"ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov)*. *Stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. II, p. 1185.

8. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, № 6, pp. 214–218.

9. *XV s"ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov)*. *Stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. II, p. 1382.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 1207.

11. *Ibid.*, P. 1209.



## 2. The First Round of Emergency Measures

In order to understand the relative ease with which Stalin managed to realize this ultra-left turn immediately after the Fifteenth Congress, it is important to take into account the actual alignment of class forces up to this time. In the ranks of the party, the working class, and among the village poor, moral indignation had accumulated in connection with growing social stratification and the increasing economic power of the kulak and NEPman. Stalin was able to utilize this indignation in making the political turn of 1928–29.

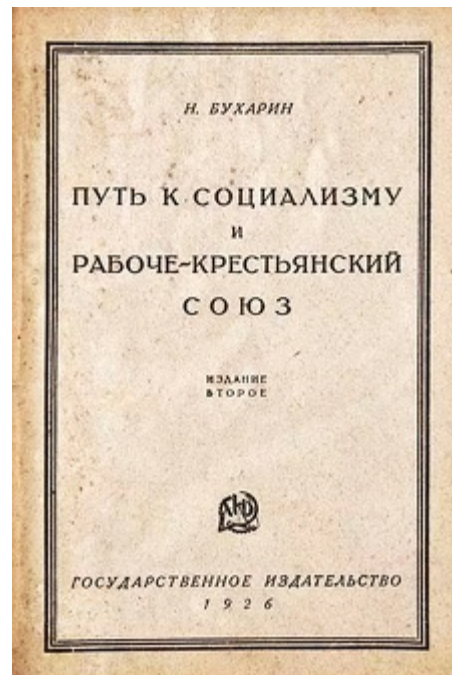
In analyzing the reasons and consequences of Stalin's victory over the Left Opposition, Trotsky wrote:

“Here, Stalin's art of maneuvers and combinations undoubtedly found expression — to be sure, in conditions favorable to him personally. He used the Right Opposition to expel the Left Opposition, for only the right wing had serious and fundamental grounds for fearing left policy. But since the expulsion of the Left Opposition provoked anger in broad circles of the party and dissatisfaction with the right wing, Stalin was able to use this discontent to strike against the right. He always remained, if not a conciliator, then an appeaser, allegedly striving to keep to a minimum the number of inevitable victims. Meanwhile, he was able to pin responsibility for harsh measures on one or another wing of the party.”<sup>1</sup>

As A. Avtorkhanov's book, *The Technology of Power*, justly notes, Bukharin was the leading theoretician and main ideologue in “the struggle against Trotskyism.” Without his propaganda machine and theoretical laboratory, “Stalin would have perished in the first skirmish with the Trotskyists, not to mention the united bloc of Trotskyists and Zinovievists.”<sup>2</sup> Broad layers of the party attributed the relatively easy victory of the Stalin-Bukharin faction over the Left Opposition to Bukharin's “theoretical might.” It was indeed in the struggle against “Trotskyism” that Bukharin acquired a reputation as the party's leading theoretician. As long as the Left Opposition had not been routed, Stalin defended Bukharin against its criticism, emphasized his merits and did not impede the creation of a “cult of Bukharin,” whom the party press cited considerably more frequently than Stalin. Moreover, in contrast to Bukharin, in his polemic with the opposition, Stalin stated that he “never had any pretensions to making any new contributions to theory.”<sup>3</sup>



*Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin  
(1888–1938)*



*The Path to Socialism and the Worker-Peasant Alliance,  
1926.*

In 1926–1927, Trotsky repeatedly emphasized that ideological unity was absent within the ruling faction. He differentiated between the centrist position of the Stalin group and the “right” position of Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky, three influential and authoritative party leaders who had entered the Politburo when Lenin was still alive. As Stephen Cohen correctly notes, for this troika, and above all for Bukharin, who was the leading architect of socio-economic policy in 1925–26, “1927 began as a year of optimistic reappraisal. It ended in a series of interrelated crises, which undermined their economic policies and reverberated adversely upon their political fortunes.”<sup>4</sup>

The looming decline in grain supplies at the end of 1927 called into question the policy of a smooth transformation of NEP, which Bukharin had attempted to work out before the Fifteenth Congress. Affluent layers of the village, whose economic might far exceeded their numbers (already by the spring of 1926, 60 percent of sellable grain was concentrated in the hands of 6 percent of peasant households), virtually stopped the sale of grain to state suppliers and cooperatives, holding on to it until spring when more favorable market conditions would emerge.

As Trotsky subsequently wrote, the Stalin faction, having unexpectedly collided with this massive “grain strike” spontaneously sweeping across the entire country, attempted to attribute it to the “naked hostility of the kulak (where did he come from?) to the socialist state, that is, by ordinary political motives. But the kulak is little inclined to that kind of ‘idealism.’ If he hid his grain, it was because the bargain offered him was unprofitable. For the very same reason, he managed to bring under his influence wide sections of the peasantry.”<sup>5</sup>

Such behavior of the well-to-do layers of the peasantry was facilitated by the fact that in the mid-1920s private traders in both the city and countryside controlled massive allotments of grain, running up to 10,000–12,000 poods. Right up until the shift to emergency measures, nothing foretold that

private grain sales would be administratively prohibited, and that private traders would be prosecuted in court as speculators.

Faced with the threat of impending famine in the cities, the Politburo abruptly changed its basic directives immediately after the Fifteenth Congress, anticipating the relative curtailment of capitalist elements in the city and countryside, “while still given (their) possible absolute growth.”<sup>6</sup> The directives also envisioned the gradual limitation and displacement of the kulak by means of economic, but certainly not administrative, much less emergency, measures.

These views, which had represented the official political credo of the ruling faction, were fully shared in 1925–27 by Stalin, who repeatedly spoke of “orienting to the middle peasant” in the Soviet village — that is, of narrowing its extreme poles — the poor peasantry and the kulaks. At the Fourteenth Congress of the VKP(b) in December 1925, he confirmed that at the Fourteenth All-Union Conference the expansion of NEP had been announced, signifying further concessions to the peasantry, which, “under the given conditions, could not live ... without some revival of capitalism.”<sup>7</sup> A few months prior to this, he had proposed that “we must do everything to moderate” the struggle with the kulak, “to regulate it by means of agreements and mutual concessions, and under no circumstances permit it to assume acute forms, to reach a point of clashes. ... For here we are quite able to avoid, and must avoid, fomenting class struggle and the complications resulting from it.”<sup>8</sup>

In October 1927, Stalin accused Zinoviev and Kamenev of proposing the transition to a policy of dekulakization, which signified, in his words, “essentially ... a policy of reverting to civil war in the countryside.”<sup>9</sup> A month later, he developed this idea in the following way: “To pursue a policy of discord with the majority of the peasantry means starting civil war in the countryside, ... disrupting our entire work of construction, disrupting our whole plan of industrializing the country.”<sup>10</sup> Stalin considered “peace in the countryside” to be “one of the fundamental conditions for the building of socialism.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, in those years, hardly anyone could have imagined that the chief “appeaser” of the countryside would quickly become the initiator of a diametrically opposed policy that would cost the country unbelievable material and human sacrifices.

Having first acknowledged at the Fifteenth Congress “the notable growth of the kulaks in the countryside,” Stalin nonetheless was very careful in formulating the policy of “economically isolating” the kulak:

“Those comrades are wrong who think that it is possible and necessary to put an end to the kulaks by means of administrative measures, through the GPU. ... The kulak must be defeated by means of economic measures and in conformity with Soviet law.”<sup>12</sup>





*Skrypnik, Stalin and Yaroslavsky at the Fifteenth Congress, December 1927.*

As soon as he was faced with an acute crisis in grain procurements, Stalin turned literally in a matter of days from an “appeaser” of the countryside into its most brutal “suppressor,” and he did so using methods that until then no one in the party had proposed. Not having a clear strategic plan, as was the case with other fundamental socio-economic problems, in a profoundly empirical way he changed the policy that had been proclaimed at the Fifteenth Congress, by backtracking both in practice and in the ideological sphere.

At first, Stalin undertook these extremely serious “shifts” in practical policy with the support of the entire Politburo, including even the future Bukharinist “troika.” At the time of the Fifteenth Congress, Rykov held a meeting of local party workers at which, according to one of its participants, “the center began to tighten the screws when it came to the seriousness of the situation with grain procurements.”

On 14 and 24 December 1927, the Central Committee [CC] sent out secret directives demanding an increase in the volume of grain procurements at any cost. In order to accomplish this aim, still relatively lenient measures were proposed: the seizure of monetary savings in the countryside by greatly speeding up all payments made by peasants, whether it be taxes, insurance, or loans, as well as collecting advances on industrial goods and agricultural machinery, and so forth.

Inasmuch as these measures “did not have the desired effect,” on 6 January 1928, the CC issued a third directive, which, according to the words of Stalin himself, was “quite exceptional both in its tone and in its demands.”<sup>13</sup> This directive, which essentially introduced the policy of emergency measures, declared that local party, soviet, and cooperative apparatuses were responsible for the difficulties in grain procurement. It demanded the use of “special repressive measures ... with regard



to the kulaks and the speculators who were wreaking havoc upon agricultural prices” and warned that the CC would raise “the necessity of replacing current Party leaders” who did not achieve in a month’s time a decisive breakthrough in grain procurements. A subsequent directive dated 14 January spoke of the CC’s decision to “press savagely on our party organizations” and reiterated the demand to arrest “speculators, kulaks, and other disrupters of the market and price policy.” Proclaiming the Urals and Siberia to be the last reserve for pumping grain supplies from the village, the directive emphasized that in these regions “applying pressure is desperately needed.”<sup>14</sup>

These directives were the result of the Politburo’s unanimous decision to implement emergency measures — that is, administrative and judicial pressure on the affluent peasants with the aim of forcing them to sell their surplus grain to the state at low purchase prices. The aim was to apply pressure only to the biggest kulaks, those with more than thirty tons of grain. However, this decision was adopted with serious vacillation, not only by the future oppositional “troika,” but also by other members of the Politburo. At the April 1929 Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission, Kalinin said: “The entire Politburo, myself included, unanimously voted for the emergency measures of last year. However, this does not mean that I, too, was in favor of the emergency measures.”<sup>15</sup>

Party leaders could not fail to understand that the issue at hand was one of reverting to methods of requisitioning that had been carried out through 1918 by Committees of the Village Poor; meanwhile Stalin and other representatives of the ruling faction had stressed over the course of the preceding years that these methods were strictly impermissible.



*Stalin meets with party activists in Barnaul, Siberia on 22 January 1928. Syrtsov, the secretary of the Sibkraikom, is sitting to Stalin's right.*

Supervision in implementing the emergency measures was entrusted directly to members of the Politburo. In the 1970s, an aged Molotov recalled that by 1 January 1928, he “had to be in Melitopol for grain procurements. In Ukraine. To extort grain.”<sup>16</sup>

In the middle of January, Molotov left for the Urals, and Stalin headed for Siberia (this trip was the last “working” trip he ever took around the country). Some records of Stalin’s speeches at the time of the Siberian trip, similar to the majority of his other speeches in 1928 that justified the administrative toughening of policy in the countryside, were published only in 1949.

At the time of this three-week journey, the itinerary of which was carefully kept secret, Stalin held talks with party activists at which he aggressively demanded that local party workers ruthlessly apply Article 107 of the Criminal Code to peasants refusing to sell grain to the state. This article made the “malicious raising of commodity prices by way of buying up, hiding, or withholding such goods from the market” a criminal offense (punishable by imprisonment, with the complete or partial confiscation of property). In an equally aggressive manner, Stalin demanded the rapid dismissal of prosecutors and judges, party and soviet workers, who demonstrated indecisiveness in the execution of these measures.

In his Siberian speeches, Stalin unequivocally let it be known that the emergency measures had to be directed not just against the kulak, but against the middle peasant as well. Having declared in one of his speeches that “the argumentation of force is as meaningful as the argumentation of economics,” he explained what he meant.

“What does the middle peasant think? He thinks: ‘It would be good if they paid more, but this is shady business. They locked up Petrukha, they locked up Vanyushka, they could lock me up too. Nah, I better sell the grain. You can’t ignore the Soviet authorities.’ And this argumentation of force exercises its influence over the middle peasant.”<sup>17</sup>

Prior to Stalin’s arrival in the regions and districts of Siberia, emergency “troikas” had been created for the struggle against large grain-holders and private speculators; all Soviet and law-enforcement agencies were subordinate to them. During this period, however, the actions of the Siberian party bodies were still relatively restrained. In one decision, the regional party committee resolved to press charges against no more than 500 to 1,500 proprietors of the largest kulak households that had concealed large reserves of grain — that is, about 1 percent of all the kulaks in Siberia.

The situation changed sharply after Stalin’s arrival. At meetings with party activists, he stated: “The country needs grain.” “We have to take the grain.” “If we have grain, it means that we can build socialism. If there’s no grain, it means we cannot.” In accordance with his demand to act according to Article 107 in an urgent and forceful manner, the Siberian Regional Committee decided to investigate these cases within twenty-four hours and review them in circuit courts within three days, without the participation of any defense. The people’s courts were prohibited from handing down exculpatory or conditional sentences, and the district courts were prohibited from lessening sentences or granting appeals (the latter measure was rescinded only after a protest on 25 February by RSFSR Prosecutor Krylenko).

In his Siberian speeches, Stalin sharply rejected the concerns of local officials that the emergency measures were worsening the situation in the countryside. Between January and the end of May 1928, 1,434 Siberian communists were found negligent in their party duties for failing to implement the emergency measures with adequate vigor, and 278 of them were expelled from the party. Many party, soviet, and cooperative officials were removed from their posts. Chairmen and members of the village soviets, plus leaders of the cooperative organizations were quickly arrested by administrative order. The most brutal executors were promoted on the wave of this “emergency” hysteria, people like the grain procurement commissioner who responded to the refusal by local workers to carry out illegal actions by declaring: “Comrade Stalin has given you the slogan: squeeze them, beat them, crush them.”<sup>18</sup>

During the conduct of the grain procurements in Siberia, there was an intensifying effort to extract various payments from the peasants — for the write-up and sale of their property, and early installments on agricultural taxes. Repressive measures were taken against defaulters, the majority of whom were middle peasants who lacked the means to pay the taxes. In many villages there were wholesale searches of peasant homesteads, which resulted in the arrest of those landholders who were found with grain reserves. In order to win the support of the poor for the emergency measures, they were promised that up to 25 percent of the confiscated grain would be granted to their family needs.

The courts, which had been transformed into an executive apparatus in the hands of the “troikas” and commissioners, decided to confiscate not only grain, but also livestock and agricultural machinery. According to incomplete statistics, more than 2,200 peasants were convicted in Siberia in the first half of 1928. All these measures, which were widely implemented in other regions as well, became known as “the Ural-Siberian method of grain procurements.”

As a result of the application of these methods, the peasantry began to hand over their grain. A few days after Stalin’s arrival in Siberia, he told the CC that “what has been lost can be made up for with brutal pressure,” and within two weeks informed them that in the last five days of January, approximately three million poods of grain were collected, above the usual norm of 1,200,000. On this basis he concluded that the plans for increased procurements would be fulfilled “if the pressure is continued with relentless force.”<sup>19</sup>

However, even with “brutal pressure” it emerged that in Siberia only a relatively few households had grain reserves over 1,870 poods (thirty tons), which, according to the decision by the Politburo, would make them subject to legal sanctions. On average, 886 poods of grain per household were confiscated on the basis of legal verdicts.

There were thirteen armed peasant uprisings in Siberia in response to the emergency measures, in which fifteen to three hundred people participated. There were many more terrorist acts against the organizers of the grain procurements.

The emergency measures caught the village communists unawares; many of them showed dismay and a negative reaction to the brutal measures used to extract grain. These moods were noted in a

special report of the Siberian division of the OGPU on 10 February 1928, where they provided typical remarks of poor-peasant communists or Komsomol members: “the policy being carried out by the party is leading us to destruction”; “this pressure smacks of 1920”; “as they did in 1919–20, the peasants, it seems, have to forge picks and stand up for themselves.” Chairman Stepanov of the Political Department said, “The opposition was right, for the policies being conducted by the CC have led to a crisis.” He was rapidly removed from his post for this comment.<sup>20</sup>

Under the influence of these kinds of events and moods in the summer of 1928, the “excesses” began to be corrected. Four hundred ninety-four people were freed who had been prosecuted in connection with the grain procurements. At the same time, 801 criminal cases were opened against officials who had abused their power during the grain procurements — that is, the immediate executors of Stalin’s directives. In the second half of 1928, mass anti-Soviet protests in Siberia had ceased.

During his Siberian trip, Stalin characterized the grain crisis for the first time not simply as a result of “kulak sabotage,” but as a consequence of the weak development of collective and state farms. In connection with this, he did not reduce the current tasks of policy in the countryside to eliminating the right of peasants to freely dispose of their grain surpluses. “In order to put the grain procurements on a more or less satisfactory basis, ...” he demanded that “all areas of our country, without exception, must be covered with collective farms (and state farms) capable of replacing not only the kulaks, but the individual peasants as well, as suppliers of grain to the state.”<sup>21</sup> In conjunction with this directive, on 1 March 1928, a letter was circulated to all local party organizations entitled, “On the Spring Sowing Campaign,” which indicated that “all the work of local party organizations in relation to carrying out the sowing campaign will be considered in relation to successes in the expansion of sowing and the collectivization of peasant households.”<sup>22</sup>

This directive, which was not announced publicly and not realized in a practical sense till the end of 1929, marked a decisive break with the recent, official directives of Stalin himself. In November 1927, in a conversation with foreign delegations, Stalin had declared: “We intend to achieve collectivism in agriculture gradually, by economic, financial, and educational and political measures. I think that the most interesting question is that of economic measures.” Stalin later emphasized that “all-embracing collectivization will come when the peasant farms are reorganized on a new technical basis, through mechanization and electrification. ... We are moving towards this goal, but have not yet reached it and are not likely to reach it soon.”<sup>23</sup>

In a report to the Fifteenth Congress, Stalin acknowledged “the relatively slow rate of development of agriculture” (which at the previous Congress he had alleged was developing “with seven-mile strides”). He saw that the “way out” for agriculture “is to unite the small and dwarf peasant farms gradually but surely, not by pressure, but by example and persuasion, into large farms based on common, comradely, collective cultivation of the land with the use of agricultural machines and tractors and scientific methods of intensive agriculture.”<sup>24</sup>



A further shift in emphasis occurred at the beginning of 1928, when Stalin began to view collectivization not from the standpoint of raising the productive forces of agriculture and transforming social relations in the countryside, but above all, as a more convenient way for the state to acquire grain. However, up until the end of 1929, in official speeches he continued to characterize wholesale collectivization as a goal of the indefinitely distant future.

After returning to Moscow, on 13 February Stalin sent a secret letter “on behalf of the CC VKP(b)” to all party organizations entitled, “Initial Results of the Procurement Campaign and Further Tasks of the Party.” It noted that by January 1928, grain procurements had barely reached 300 million poods, in comparison to 428 million poods in January 1927. The failure in the grain procurements was explained in the following way:

“Elements alien to the Party have of late developed both in our Party and in our other organizations, elements who fail to see that there are classes in the countryside, who do not understand the principles of our class policy, and who try to work in such a way as not to offend anybody in the countryside, to live in peace with the kulak, and generally to preserve their popularity among ‘all strata’ of the countryside.”<sup>25</sup>

Stalin acknowledged that responsibility for the mistakes leading to the grain procurement crisis lay not only with local party organizations, but above all with the Central Committee. However, he placed blame exclusively on local organizations for “distortions and excesses” in the grain procurement campaign: the application of forced-requisition measures, the creation of border detachments between separate regions, abusive practices in carrying out arrests, the illegal confiscation of grain surpluses, etc.

In actual fact, all these “excesses” assumed an extremely wide scale, as we have seen, precisely from the time of Stalin’s trip to Siberia. Following the example set by Stalin, who had removed from their posts and expelled from the party dozens of Siberian officials for “softness,” “conciliationism,” and “fusing with the kulak,” party organizations acted the same way in other regions. Thus, in the Urals, 1,157 party, Soviet, and cooperative officials were removed from their posts from January to March 1928. Everywhere markets were closed, and confiscations were made of not only surpluses destined for sale, but of grain reserves that the peasant households needed for their own production and consumption.

In a report at a session of the communist faction of the Presidium of the VTsIK [Central Executive Committee] on 26 March 1928, secretary of the VTsIK A.S. Kisilev presented many examples demonstrating that everywhere the arsenal of methods used for grain procurements included not just the suppression of the sale and resale of grain at prices proposed by private suppliers, but the levying of additional taxes on peasant households (not just kulak households, but middle-peasant, and even poor ones); the compulsory issuance of “loans for the renewal of the peasant economy”; and the forced sale by peasants of the remainder of their grain that was intended for sowing and to feed their families. Kisilev stated that these administrative measures, applied for the first time since the civil war, “have thoroughly damaged the mood of the peasantry ... The peasants say: ‘Is it possible that we’ve arrived at war communism? ... You cannot be sure that you will have a solid base upon which to further develop your farm.’”<sup>26</sup>

In order to make the emergency measures appear to be legal, on 21 April 1928, the TsIK passed “The Status of a Single Agricultural Tax for 1928–1929,” which instituted “individual taxation” of the highest-earning peasant households. In accordance with this directive, village residents themselves had to determine which households were liable to individual taxation, the size of which was approximately twice that of the taxes on other households that were practically no different when it came to their share of land and livestock. In response to these measures many peasants started to reduce the volume of their production and the area of the land they were sowing.

While spurring on the policy of emergency measures, Stalin simultaneously insured himself against blame for the unfortunate consequences that the policy might produce. In his secret directive of 13 February 1928, command-administrative orders (“to continue the pressure on the kulak — the real, large-scale holders of surplus grain”) coincided with provisos that the pressure had to be applied on the basis of Soviet law and in no way touch the middle layer of the peasantry. Moreover, Stalin confirmed that “NEP is the basis of our economic policy, and will remain so for a long historical period.” He stated that “talk to the effect that we are abolishing NEP, that we are introducing the forced-requisition system, dekulakization and so forth, is counter-revolutionary chatter that must be most vigorously combated.”<sup>27</sup>

Stalin spoke even more emphatically in favor of preserving NEP at the July 1928 Plenum of the Central Committee, at which he characterized NEP as a policy designed “to overcome the capitalist elements and to build a socialist economy by utilizing the market, and acting through the market.”<sup>28</sup>

While constantly maneuvering over the entire course of 1928, Stalin issued his contradictory directives in an atmosphere of extreme secrecy which he had enforced, motivated by the fact that the publication of the Central Committee’s directives — and even more so, the disagreements emerging within the ruling faction — could be used by the “Trotskyists.” For Stalin during that period, the struggle with the section of the Left Opposition that had been expelled from the party, but had not been broken, was no less important than overcoming economic difficulties.

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1. L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin*, vol. II, M., 1990, p. 246.
  2. A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiya vlasti*, p. 108.
  3. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 9, p. 116 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 9, p. 121].
  4. S. Koen [S. Cohen], *Bukharin. Politicheskaiia biografiia*, M., 1988, p. 324. [Stephen Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution. A Political Biography, 1888–1938*, Oxford UP, 1980, p. 263].
  5. L. D. Trotskii, *Predannaia revoliutsiia*, p. 31 [L. Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p. 29].
  6. *XV s’ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol’shevikov)*, vol. II, p. 1444.
  7. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 7, p. 357 [J. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 7, M., 1954, p. 363].
  8. *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 179 [*Ibid.*, pp. 179, 181].
  9. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 10, pp. 196–197 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 10, p. 203].
  10. *Ibid.*, p. 259 [*Ibid.*, p. 264].
  11. *Ibid.*, p. 197 [*Ibid.*, p. 205].



[12.](#) Ibid., p. 311 [Ibid., p. 319].

[13.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, p. 11 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p.13].

[14.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1991, № 5, pp. 195–196; *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1991, № 1, pp. 70, 72.

[15.](#) *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1989, № 10, p. 109.

[16.](#) *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym. Iz dnevnika F. Chueva*, M., 1991, p. 376.

[17.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1991, № 6, p. 211.

[18.](#) See *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1991, № 1, pp. 74–76.

[19.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1991, № 5, p. 201; № 7, p. 178.

[20.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, [Information of the CC of the CPSU], 1991, № 7, pp. 179–182.

[21.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 5, 7. [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 7, 9].

[22.](#) *Istoriia SSSR*, 1990, № 5, p. 17.

[23.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 10, pp. 221, 225 [Stalin, *Works*, pp. 227, 231].

[24.](#) Ibid., pp. 304–306 [Ibid., pp. 312–313].

[25.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, p. 13 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 15–16].

[26.](#) *Pravda*, 26 August 1988.

[27.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, p. 15 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 18].

[28.](#) Ibid., pp. 144–145 [Ibid., p.151].



*Leaders of the Left Opposition, 1927: Sitting: Serebriakov, Radek, Trotsky, Boguslavsky, Preobrazhensky. Standing: Rakovsky, Drobnis, Beloborodov, Sosnovsky.*



*More members of the Left Opposition, 1927. Including: Trotsky, Zinoviev, Smilga, Radek.*

# 3. The First Round of Reprisals against the Left Opposition

Upon receiving a mandate at the Fifteenth Congress for harsh treatment of the Left Opposition, immediately after the congress the Stalinist apparatus began to implement sanctions against it that far exceeded the limits set by this mandate. While 970 oppositionists had been expelled from the party between the Fourteenth Congress in December 1925 through 15 November 1927 (that is, over almost two years), during the next two and one-half months, 2,288 were expelled (including 1,494 in the last two weeks of 1927). In Moscow alone, 816 people were expelled for “factional work.” Among the expelled, according to social position, workers constituted 46.9 percent, according to occupation — 36.4 percent. The portion of workers among those expelled in the Leningrad region reached 68 percent; in Ukraine — up to 66.3 percent.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of the expelled were sent into administrative exile to distant regions of the country. Insofar as the exiles were charged with anti-Soviet activity, they were deprived of the right to vote and of membership in the trade unions. They were required to regularly appear for registration at local organs of the GPU. Monthly aid of thirty rubles was assigned to them, which was cut in half in 1929. Securing work for the exiles was entrusted to party bodies in the places of exile.



*Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev, prior to exile, 1927.*

The fate of the most prominent oppositionists was at the disposal of the department of registration and assignment of cadres under the Central Committee of the VKP(b). Negotiations with them were

conducted by Ordzhonikidze, chairman of the Central Control Commission, and Kosior, secretary of the Central Committee; they declared that it was impossible to leave leaders of the opposition in Moscow and major industrial centers, and for members of their families to retain the apartments they occupied.

Trotsky was exiled to Alma-Ata in the middle of January in 1928. On the day scheduled for his departure, a demonstration for Trotsky's send-off gathered at the railway station. Clashes between demonstrators and agents of the GPU and police ended in mass arrests. In a coded message to Stalin, who was in Siberia at that time, Kosior announced that up to 3,000 people had gathered at the station in connection with Trotsky's scheduled departure. He informed Stalin that following the detention of nineteen people, "measures would be taken for the future removal of the most active participants and organizers of the demonstration."<sup>2</sup>

Trotsky's exile was postponed until the following day. In order to disprove the Politburo's official version that the exile of oppositionists was being done with their consent, Trotsky refused to go to the station voluntarily, and GPU agents had to carry him in their arms. Two of his closest assistants, Poznansky and Sermuks, who had independently chosen to follow him, were arrested and sent to remote regions of Siberia.



*Left Oppositionists in exile.*  
*Top left: Viktor Borisovich Eltsin.*  
*Middle right: Igor M. Poznansky.*

Repressions increased the departure from the opposition of its least steadfast members. Of the 3,381 people who submitted declarations about leaving the opposition, 37 percent took this step in the period between the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Congress, and 63 percent during the following two and one-half months. In February 1928, another 614 people signed such statements. This was bound up with the fact that after the congress, a sharp dilemma confronted the oppositionists: either "break with the opposition" and maintain the usual way of life, often in the ranks of the ruling bureaucracy, or condemn oneself to the harsh conditions of remote exile.



Some of “those who departed” from the opposition declared that they were breaking with it both organizationally and ideologically, i.e., they were renouncing their views. Others stated that they were ceasing factional work, but they could not abandon a defense of their views within the framework of the Party Statutes (although the slightest attempts at such a “defense” were blocked by decisions of the Fifteenth Congress).

The first of the opposition leaders “to break with the opposition” was Sokolnikov, who announced at the Fifteenth Congress that several months before he “should have separated from the opposition bloc” because of fundamental differences with it.<sup>3</sup> For this step, Sokolnikov was left in the Central Committee elected at the Fifteenth Congress.

After Sokolnikov, a similar step was taken by other leaders of the Zinoviev portion of the opposition bloc; even before the congress they had proposed to the Trotsky group that they unconditionally subordinate themselves to any of the congress decisions. They justified their readiness to capitulate by saying that otherwise the opposition would be on the path “of building a second party,” and would thereby doom themselves to destruction. Trotsky and his group felt that such a position was a betrayal.

While the congress was in session, the Zinovievists gathered separately from the Trotskyists and prepared a declaration about ceasing to defend their views. Any other behavior, as they stressed, “inevitably will bring us into collision not even with the party, but with the Soviet regime and its organs,” that is, would doom them to harsh (for those times) repressions. Inside the Zinoviev group, such a capitulationist position met resistance from its “left” wing headed by Safarov.

A deepening of the split between the Trotskyist and Zinovievist portions of the opposition bloc occurred after the publication in *Pravda* of letters seized by the GPU from Trotsky to his co-thinkers in the USSR and abroad. These letters were published along with an editorial article entitled “Subversive Work of the Trotskyists against the Comintern. Scheidemann’s Accomplices at Work.” Here the published documents were described as evidence that “not for a single day after the congress did the former oppositionists-Trotskyists cease their filthy anti-party and anti-Comintern work.” Apparently belonging to the pen of Bukharin, the main editor of *Pravda*, the article was sprinkled with expressions such as “the wagon-train of political garbage headed by Trotsky.”

The published letters spoke of the betrayal by Zinoviev and Kamenev and of the necessity for the opposition to mercilessly break with the capitulators. Trotsky called upon his foreign supporters to conduct a broad political campaign against the expulsion of communists close to the Left Opposition from all parties of the Comintern, and against the exile of Soviet oppositionists. He proposed to “thoroughly expose the charlatanry of the struggle against ‘Trotskyism,’” describing this struggle as “criminally absurd.” The goal was set for communists abroad: “to strike at the leadership of the VKP(b), without opposing the USSR.”<sup>4</sup>

A few days later, Zinoviev and Kamenev placed an “Open Letter” in *Pravda* in which they once again confirmed that they were fully submitting to all decisions of the congress, “they were capitulating before the VKP(b),” and as a result of this decision they had broken with Trotsky’s group

and with their own co-thinkers in Germany (the Ruth Fischer-Maslow group). As proof of the “organic nature” of their actions, they declared that even in 1926–1927, an internal struggle had gone on within the united opposition bloc, and that even during their participation in the bloc they “had not felt it was possible to lay down their arms against the errors of Trotskyism.”<sup>5</sup>

In response to these claims, Trotsky published evidence in opposition “samizdat” that Zinoviev and Lashevich had admitted at factional meetings and in conversations with Leningrad workers that “Trotskyism” had been dreamt up by them in 1924 as part of the struggle for power. Trotsky emphasized that “the struggle against so-called ‘Trotskyism’ was the hook with which Stalin was hauling in Zinoviev, and Zinoviev — his own ‘leftists’ (Safarov and others).”

In 1928, only an insignificant part of the Trotsky group followed the example of the Zinovievists. The first among this group to announce his capitulation was Pyatakov. Next came the statements published in *Pravda* by Krestinsky and Antonov-Ovseenko about their break with the “Trotskyist opposition.” Krestinsky’s statement was relatively restrained. He wrote that he had never had “organizational ties” with the opposition, although he was connected with the majority of its leaders by “long-standing and close relations.” A more shameful statement was given by Antonov-Ovseenko, who expressed regret that he “had not drawn all the necessary conclusions already from ... his first disagreement” with Trotsky in 1915. He vowed that he now recognized the truth, “personally,” of Stalin.<sup>6</sup>

On 9 May, Trotsky sent his co-thinkers a letter in which he stressed that the principled position of genuine oppositionists did not allow “any diplomacy, lying, corrupting politicking in the spirit of Zinoviev-Kamenev-Pyatakov, selfishly bureaucratic, thoroughly irresponsible, Pontius-Pilate-like washing of the hands in the spirit of Krestinsky, or Smerdiakov-like<sup>7</sup> groveling in the spirit of Antonov-Ovseenko. By the way, there is no reason to speak of this. We must tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”<sup>8</sup>

In 1928, Stalin and the Bukharinists, fully in solidarity with him regarding the “Trotskyists,” had not yet decided to embark on incarceration of oppositionists in prisons and concentration camps. The atmosphere in the party was still not such that it would have been possible to even think of more stringent measures of repression for dissident communists than temporary exile. In exile colonies, oppositionists established contact with sympathizers among the local population, joined together in circles in which they discussed political events in the USSR and abroad, and conducted active correspondence with their co-thinkers in other colonies. In order to avoid inspection of the most important documents by agents of the GPU, a secret postal network was set up, i.e., the exchange of clandestine letters by special couriers.

The force holding all this activity together was, of course, Trotsky. From April through October 1928, he sent from Alma-Ata around 550 telegrams and 800 political letters, including a number of major works; he received around 1000 letters and 700 telegrams, the majority of which were sent collectively. These figures give an idea of the scale of the activity of the opposition and the number of people who were drawn into it.



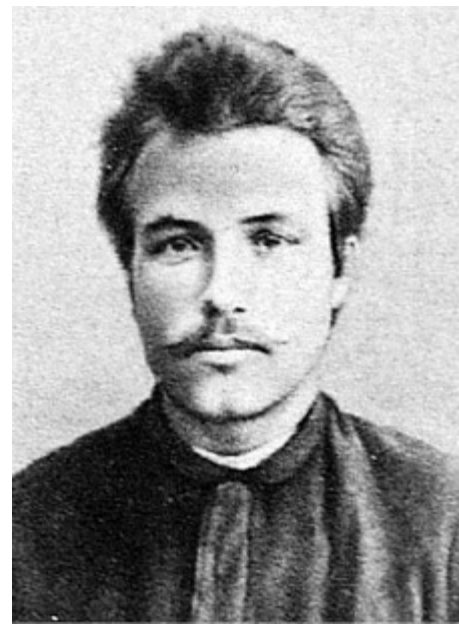
From their places of exile, documents from Trotsky and other oppositionists reached those at liberty; their comrades had formed underground groups in which only communists participated, including those who had signed declarations of capitulation in order to avoid being expelled from the party or being sent into exile. In this way they could continue illegal opposition activity. According to Avtorkhanov, the majority of oppositionists who declared their break from the opposition did this in order to actually continue the struggle for their ideas. “Trotskyists of this kind were in all segments of the bodies of state management, with the exclusion of the party apparatus and the organs of the political police.”<sup>9</sup> The oppositionists created their own “Red Cross,” which gathered resources to help comrades who had been driven from work and sent into exile.

Opposition groups conducted propaganda among workers by systematically distributing proclamations and leaflets, including articles and appeals signed by Trotsky, Muralov, Mrachkovsky, and other exiled leaders of the opposition. Reprinted on hectograph, such documents were also effective among the non-party intelligentsia, some of whom sympathized with the views of the opposition.<sup>10</sup>

Besides this, many oppositionists continued to criticize the party leadership at party meetings, and led “slow-downs” at factories (that is what strikes were officially called at that time), especially when collective contracts were signed that infringed upon workers’ rights (at that time the procedure of concluding contracts and re-opening them was informal and allowed workers to defend their interests).



*Timofei V. Sapronov*  
(1887–1937)



*Vladimir M. Smirnov*  
(1887–1937)

The most irreconcilable position toward the Stalinist leadership was taken by the group of “Democratic Centralists,” headed by Timofei V. Sapronov and Vladimir M. Smirnov. On 20 December 1928, Smirnov sent a statement from exile to *Pravda* and the Central Control Commission, in which he wrote:

“I have always considered it shameful to hide one’s views and convictions. I have openly said that today’s leaders of the VKP(b) have betrayed the proletariat, that today’s government, acting under the guise of Soviet power, which it in fact has destroyed, is hostile to the working class, and that the proletariat must and will fight against it for their own dictatorship, for the genuine power of the Soviets.”<sup>[11](#)</sup>

The Sapronovists felt that it was wrong to gather mass collections of signatures beneath opposition documents, for this would doom those signing to immediate expulsion from the party. They called upon their supporters to act conspiratorially and shift to the position of an illegal faction within the party.

After the exile of “Democratic Centralist” leaders, their underground organizations acted in Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, Orekhovo-Zuevo and other cities. The Leningrad group, according to figures from the OGPU, had up to 300 members. At the beginning of 1928, these groups distributed in Moscow and Leningrad several thousand leaflets, in which the exile of oppositionists was described as “an offensive of fascism against the revolutionary segment of Lenin’s party.” They called upon “the removal of the leadership which is capable of doing anything but carrying out Bolshevik policy.”<sup>[12](#)</sup>



*Leon Trotsky and Natalia Sedova in 1932.*

The party and working-class masses displayed an active interest in the fate of Trotsky and other exiled oppositionists. When Trotsky’s health worsened in the fall of 1928, rumors about this immediately made their way to Moscow. In reply to many questions about the status of Trotsky’s health, members of the Politburo speaking at party meetings assured everyone that he was completely healthy. In this regard, Natalia I. Sedova sent a telegram to Uglanov, the first secretary of the Moscow Committee, in which she said:

“Instead of saying that Trotsky’s illness is to your advantage, for it might prevent him from thinking and writing, you simply deny this illness. This is what Kalinin, Molotov and others are doing in their speeches. The fact that you are compelled to withhold a reply to this question from the masses, and are forced to dodge the issue in such an unworthy manner, shows that the working class does not believe the political slander against Trotsky.”<sup>13</sup>

**ПИСЬМО Х. Г. РАКОВСКОГО О ПРИЧИНАХ  
ПЕРЕРОЖДЕНИЯ ПАРТИИ И ГОСУДАР-  
СТВЕННОГО АППАРАТА.**

Астрахань, 2 августа 1928 г.

Дорогой товарищ В. В ваших «Размышлениях о массах» от 9-го июля, подымая вопрос об «активности» рабочего класса, вы подходите к основной проблеме о сохранении за пролетариатом роли гегемона в нашем государстве. Хотя все требования оппозиции и преследуют эту цель, я согласен с вами, что по этому вопросу не все сказано. До сих пор этот вопрос нами рассматривался в связи со всей проблемой захвата и удержания политической власти, тогда как он должен, для лучшего его освещения, быть выделен, как отдельный самостоятельный вопрос. В сущности сами события его уже выдвинули в этом качестве.

За оппозицией останется та неотъемлемая заслуга перед партией, что она своевременно подняла тревогу об ужасающем понижении активности рабочей массы и об ее все более и более равнодушном отношении к судьбам пролетарской диктатуры и советского государства.

*Rakovsky's Letter to Valentinov*



*Khristian Georgievich Rakovsky*

The exiled oppositionists lived an intense intellectual life, using the time of forced separation from practical work for a deeper analysis of the processes taking place in the party and in the nation. The results of such an analysis found their most profound expression in the letter from Khristian G. Rakovsky to Grigory B. Valentinov. Written in the summer of 1928 in Astrakhan exile, this letter was published in the *Bulletin of the Opposition* in 1929 under the heading: “A Letter on the Causes of the Degeneration of the Party and of the State Apparatus.” In the introduction to the first full publication of this letter in the Soviet press, the historian V. P. Danilov correctly notes that it “represents a concentrated exposition of the reflections of a highly educated revolutionary about the fate of the revolution and the social forces that had produced it, and about the beginning tragedy of Stalin’s ‘great breakthrough.’ Now, sixty years later, this letter is perceived as a brilliant historical and sociological essay, written on a level that has been unattainable so far for our contemporary sociology and historiography.”<sup>14</sup> In subsequent years, Trotsky repeatedly referred to this work by Rakovsky, endorsing its basic ideas and developing them further.

The basic meaning of Rakovsky’s letter lay in a striving to comprehend the causes of the Left Opposition’s defeat and the usurpation of the power of the party and working class by the Stalin faction. Rakovsky attributed these causes first of all to the lowering of the political activity of the working-class masses and to the “horrifying destruction which social and political indifference has



wrought in the working class.”<sup>15</sup> “*Neither physically, nor morally*, neither the working class, nor the party, are what they were about ten years ago,” wrote Rakovsky.

“I think that I am not exaggerating too much if I say that the party member of 1917 would hardly recognize himself in the person of the party member of 1928. ... You ask what has happened to the active nature of the party and our working class, where did their revolutionary initiative go, where are their ideological interests, revolutionary courage, or plebeian pride? You are surprised that there is so much baseness, cowardliness, pusillanimity, careerism and much else that I would add on my part. How is it that people with a rich revolutionary past, who are undoubtedly honest, who have personally given countless examples of revolutionary self-sacrifice, have turned into pathetic bureaucrats?”<sup>16</sup>

To answer these questions, Rakovsky resorted to analogies with the Great French Revolution. In its history he traced processes similar to those which had happened in Soviet society of the 1920s: the formal and actual transfer of power into the hands of a constantly decreasing number of citizens; the separating out of a ruling upper-stratum of bureaucrats from the initially homogeneous revolutionary masses; the degeneration of Jacobin revolutionaries as a result of their yearning for wealth; the gradual liquidation of elections in the Jacobin clubs and state bodies and their replacement by appointments. As a result of all this, the alienation of the popular masses from ruling the country, and the death of many revolutionaries, including by guillotine, in combination with hunger and unemployment, made the French people “grow unaccustomed” to freedom and led “to such a physical and moral exhaustion of the masses, that the popular masses in Paris and elsewhere in France needed thirty-seven years to be ready for a new revolution.”<sup>17</sup>

Rakovsky stressed that the examination of the reasons for analogous changes in the behavior and moods of the working class, after it becomes the ruling class, was new for Marxist theory. He felt one of those reasons to be the objective difficulties connected with an insufficient ability of the class that is coming to power to correctly use that power. These difficulties, which Rakovsky called the “professional risk” of power, he related to the fact that the intimate and organic link that had existed between the working class and its vanguard in the period of fighting for power, after it has been won had been replaced by a differentiation within the working class and its party. A section of the party had turned into agents of power, into professional bureaucrats. Thus the party and Soviet bureaucracy arose and separated out into an independent group — “the greatest sociological phenomenon, which, however, could only be grasped and understood if one examined its consequences in the changes in the ideology of the party and working class.”<sup>18</sup>

The rise of this bureaucracy, which Rakovsky called a new sociological category, resulted in the transfer of functions which earlier had been fulfilled by the entire party or the entire class, to a limited number of people from the party and class. The growing functional differentiation led to a change in the psychology of people carrying out leading functions in the state administration or in the state economy. They “ceased being, not only objectively, but subjectively as well, not only physically, but morally as well, a part of the same working class; for instance, a ‘Derzhimorda’<sup>19</sup> administrator, despite being a communist, despite having come from the proletariat, and despite, perhaps, having been at a factory bench a few years ago, would by no means embody in the eyes of the workers the best qualities which the proletariat possesses.”<sup>20</sup>

No less profound changes occurred in the party, whose social structure was much less homogeneous than the structure of the working class. When the party had been living an intense intellectual life and leading an active struggle, it had turned its mixed social composition into a common alloy. All of its members were imbued with proletarian consciousness in the struggle against capitalism. After the seizure of power, this class consciousness should have developed in the process of conscious and active participation in running the state. “But since our bureaucracy has made an empty phrase of this participation, the workers do not acquire this class consciousness anywhere.”<sup>21</sup>

All of these difficulties, in Rakovsky’s opinion, could have been overcome if the leadership of the party, as Lenin and the Left Opposition had demanded, had concerned itself with “guarding both the party and the working class from the harmful impact of the privileges, advantages and indulgences that accompany power,” from the corrupting influence of NEP and the temptations of bourgeois mores.<sup>22</sup> Stalin’s faction, however, set out on the exactly opposite path. It transformed the differentiation within the working class and party from a functional into a social one, i.e., it deepened the separation of the functions between the bureaucracy and the working class, between the upper and lower layers of the party by their material differentiation. Rakovsky writes:

“I have in mind that the social status of a communist who has an automobile at his disposal, a good apartment, regular vacations and receives the party maximum in pay, differs from the status of the same communist who works in a coal mine, where he receives from fifty to sixty rubles per month.”<sup>23</sup>

Recalling that even at the beginning of the 1920s, workers and white-collar employees were divided into eighteen categories according to their pay, Rakovsky wrote that the increase of this differentiation subsequently had facilitated the degeneration of the party and soviet apparatus. In confirmation of this statement he referred to many facts which testified to “the strangulation of any control by the masses, to the clamping down, persecution, and terror, toying with the lives and existence of party members and workers.”<sup>24</sup>

Rakovsky came to the conclusion that any reform of the party that relied on the party bureaucracy was a utopia. He considered that the first condition for serious political reform would be reducing the numbers and functions of the party apparatus. He proposed that three-quarters of the apparatus be eliminated, and the activity of the remaining quarter be constrained within very strict guidelines. Only in this way would the members of the party recover their rights and acquire reliable guarantees “against the despotism to which the upper echelons have accustomed us.”<sup>25</sup>

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1. *II Plenum TsKK sozyva XV s"ezda VKP(b) 2–5 aprelia 1928 g.*, M., 1928, pp. 252–255.

2. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* [Information of the CC of the CPSU], 1991, № 5, p. 201.

3. *XV s"ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov)*, vol. II, p. 1132.

4. *Pravda*, 15 January 1928.

5. *Pravda*, 27 January 1928.

6. *Pravda*, 8 April 1928.



- [7.](#) Smerdiakov is one of the main characters in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*; noted for his extreme servility and obsequiousness (*translator*).
- [8.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1989, № 12, pp. 82–83.
- [9.](#) A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiia vlasti*, p. 112.
- [10.](#) Thus, during interrogation by the GPU in 1934, Osip Mandelshtam admitted that in 1927, he had felt “not overly profound, but rather impassioned sympathy for Trotskyism” (*Ogonëk*, 1991, № 1, p. 18).
- [11.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1991, № 7, p. 51.
- [12.](#) *II Plenum TsKK sozyva XV s''ezda VKP(b)*, pp. 245–246.
- [13.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Moia zhizn'* [My Life], M., 1991, p. 529.
- [14.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1989, № 12, p. 70.
- [15.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 73 [See: Christian Rakovsky, “The ‘Professional Dangers’ of Power,” in *Selected Writings on Opposition in the USSR, 1923–30*, London: Allison & Busby, 1980, pp. 124–136].
- [16.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 78.
- [17.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- [18.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- [19.](#) “Derzhimorda”: a coarse and despotic administrator, using police methods. Named after a character in Nikolai Gogol's *The Inspector General* (1835) (*translator*).
- [20.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- [21.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- [22.](#) *Ibid.*
- [23.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- [24.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- [25.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 81.

# 4. The Left Opposition Evaluates the Emergency Measures

Rakovsky sharply criticized the position of those oppositionists who considered the shift to emergency measures to be a symptom that the party leadership was drawing closer to the views of the opposition.

A more concrete analysis of the social meaning of the extraordinary measures was given in letters from another prominent oppositionist, the famous party journalist, Lev Sosnovsky. These letters were devoted to an analysis of the processes that were unfolding at that time in the party, the country, and especially in the Siberian village which Sosnovsky observed during his exile. In publishing these letters, the editors of the *Bulletin of the Opposition* noted that they shed light on the first steps of Stalin's "left course" and explained rather well why their author had been arrested in Barnaul, his place of exile, and imprisoned in a Chelyabinsk solitary confinement cell.

In his first letter, written in March 1928, Sosnovsky provided many facts that showed the power and influence which the kulak had gained in the Siberian countryside. Thus, in the Barnaul area, only 8 percent of the households used their own threshing machines, whereas 88 percent rented them.

"That means that almost the whole region depends on 8 percent of the kulaks, for in the entire arsenal of the kulak's exploitative resources, the thresher is the most poisonous. ... Sometimes it is even beneficial for the kulak to leave his grain unharvested, while earning money during that period by exploiting machinery. Now it is clear that the kulak has magnificently evaluated agricultural inventory as an instrument of domination."<sup>1</sup>



*L. Sosnovsky, "Soviet Virgin Soil."  
The peasant has just placed a sign:  
"The Village of Rosa Luxemburg."*



*Lev Semyonovich Sosnovsky  
(1886–1937)*

Sosnovsky recalled that the state had acquired agricultural machinery abroad for gold, diverting funds from industrialization, and then had sold it to peasants on credit and at favorable prices. However, benefits from these practices were in fact enjoyed only by the most privileged layer in the countryside.

In characterizing the sweeping transition of the party leadership at the beginning of 1928 from virtual support for the kulak to "intensified pressure" on him, Sosnovsky stressed that "we are talking about the kind of pressure when any sense of proportion is lost, when unbridled administrative measures begin to be employed." The party, soviet and cooperative apparatus, which was unprepared to carry out grain procurement using methods of persuasion, "recklessly ran about like a dog that has been unleashed"; it lashed out not only at the kulak, but at the middle (and sometimes even poor) peasant layers, thereby contributing to the fact that the mood of the entire countryside was against the party. To confirm that the procurement campaign was taking place in this way not only in Siberia, Sosnovsky referred to a letter he had received from an old party member (not an oppositionist), who had participated in grain procurements in Ukraine. The letter stated that "what is happening in Ukraine cannot be called 'procurement.' There is a search of barns and attics, but, in his words, there are no procurements."<sup>2</sup>

In developing these thoughts in a letter to Trotsky written in July-August 1928, Sosnovsky proposed to emphatically refute Rykov's declaration that the Left Opposition supposedly approved of the "emergency measures." "Rykov describes matters in such a way," Sosnovsky sarcastically wrote,

“it’s as if we are terribly worried that the outrages of the Rykov-Stalin apparatus in the countryside might come to an end.” In connection with this, Sosnovsky noted that Stalin’s trip to Siberia had already dissipated “the stupid charges against us of an anti-peasant deviation...”

“Closing the market; the universal inspection of farm households; the introduction of the term ‘excesses’; forbidding peasants to mill their grain beyond a miserable consumption quota; the forced distribution (gun in hand) of loan obligations; the violation of all deadlines for levying taxes; voluntary rate-paying as a supplementary and unexpected tax on the middle peasant ... Where in our platform or in our counter-theses is there anything like this? Eliminating NEP in the countryside — who among us could have let this thought enter our mind even in a heated discussion? But the CC has done all this. Let the comedies play with their accusations of excesses. There are enough official documents to expose the leadership for abolishing NEP in practice ... That is why I think that we should clearly respond to Rykov’s speech about our attitude to ‘the extraordinary’ measures of the past winter. They shouldn’t blame us for what they’re guilty of themselves.”<sup>3</sup>

In later summarizing how the opposition explained the reasons behind Stalin’s “new course,” Trotsky wrote:

“While the leaders tranquilly asserted that the goods famine was outliving itself, that ‘a peaceful tempo in economic development was at hand,’ that the grain collections would in the future be carried on more ‘evenly,’ etc., the strengthened kulak carried with him the middle peasant and subjected the cities to a grain blockade. In January 1928 the working class stood face to face with the specter of an advancing famine. History knows how to play spiteful jokes. In that very month, when the kulaks were taking the revolution by the throat, the representatives of the Left Opposition were being thrown into prison or banished to different parts of Siberia in punishment for their ‘panic’ before the specter of the kulak.”<sup>4</sup>

In order to overcome the growing economic and social difficulties, it would have been necessary for the whole party to discuss the question of the concrete and least painful ways of changing its policy. By then, however, the method of inner-party discussions had been abolished for all time. The new political orientation was developing in an indistinct struggle within the upper-echelon bloc, which was hidden not only from the party masses, but even from lower-level apparatchiks.

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1. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1929, № 3–4, p. 16. [L. Sosnovsky, “Four Letters from Exile”].

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.

4. L. Trotskii, *Predannaia revoliutsiia*, p. 31 [*Revolution Betrayed*, p. 29].

# 5. Stalin Maneuvers

In order to justify the extraordinary measures in the eyes of the party, Stalin first advanced the thesis of sharpening class struggle in the country. In pursuit of his goals, he carried out the first major provocation aimed at placing blame for the economic difficulties, caused by mistakes of the party leadership, on the “sabotage of the bourgeois intelligentsia.” For the April 1928 Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission, convened to discuss the ways out of the economic crisis, Stalin served up a new “spicy dish” in the form of an announcement about “The Shakhty Affair.” The OGPU, which was now outside of any control by the leaders of the Left Opposition, began preparing the first judicial forgery. Although the trial of the group of engineers from the city of Shakhty in the Donets Basin only took place in May 1928, the “Shakhty Affair” had already been announced in March, and at the April Plenum, people already spoke of the “lessons” that needed to be drawn from this case.

The Bukharin “troika” not only did not make any attempts to investigate this “affair,” they actually supported the practice of falsified trials. In discussing the “lessons” of the Shakhty Affair at the April Plenum, Rykov declared that the party should not be guided by the abstract principle of punishing those guilty according to justice. He said it was necessary to approach the question of arrest not so much from the standpoint of the interests of our criminal practice or the principle of “justice,” as from the standpoint of “big-time policy.”<sup>1</sup> A few months later, as he told Kamenev about disagreements between the “troika” and Stalin, Bukharin asserted that in some questions Stalin “was carrying out correct policy.” As confirmation, Bukharin said that Stalin had proposed not to shoot the defendants in the Shakhty Affair, at a time when “we voted against” this proposal.<sup>2</sup>





*Defendants hear the verdict at the trial of the Shakhty Affair (1928).*

The April Plenum unanimously adopted a resolution “On Grain Procurements in the Current Year and On Organizing the Grain Procurement Campaign for 1928–29.” It noted that “the CC had to adopt a number of measures, including those of an extraordinary kind,” in order to “paralyze the threat of a general economic crisis and guarantee not only the supply of grain to the cities, but also to defend the tempo of the nation’s industrialization adopted by the party.” In addition, it pointed to the “distortions and excesses allowed in places by party and soviet organs.” Among the excesses “which must categorically be abolished,” were “all methods which, in striking not only at the kulak, but also at the middle peasant, were in fact instances of sliding onto the rails of forced requisitions [of the Civil War period].<sup>3</sup>

The transcript of the April 1928 Plenum, as with all the Plenums of the CC over the next years, was not published in the press. The decisions of the Plenum were explained in reports given to meetings of party activists in Moscow and Leningrad by Stalin and Bukharin, in which, however, different emphasis was placed. Bukharin stated that “on the economic side we had the violation of fundamental economic proportions, and on the *basis* of this we witnessed a certain economic *activity among the kulaks*, much greater than before, an attempt to unite with the middle peasant on the basis of a definite price policy.” Meanwhile, he stressed that “the difficulties which we encountered and from which we have not yet fully emerged, are by no means mandatory. One cannot say that they were absolutely inevitable, or unavoidable. They developed as a result of our economic policy, as a result of miscalculations by our planning leadership.” Seeing “historical justification” of the “extreme and extraordinary measures” in the rapid increase of the tempos of grain procurements, Bukharin simultaneously condemned “failure to understand the transitory and conditional character of the

extraordinary measures,” the over-estimation in general of the methods of an administrative type, and a denial of the importance of the growth of individual farm households.<sup>4</sup>

Stalin, in contrast, began his report with a call to “criticism and self-criticism.” In previous months, many instances of corruption in the party, state, and economic apparatus had been uncovered on the basis of this slogan. For Stalin, however, this slogan had another, more remote aim. He acknowledged, fully in the spirit of the Left Opposition, that “leaders, moving upwards, grow distant from the masses, and the masses begin to look at them from below, without daring to criticize them,” and that “there has formed, there came into being historically, a group of leaders ... who are becoming all but inaccessible for the masses.” He urged “giving the Soviet people the opportunity to ‘scold’ their leaders” so that the latter would listen to “any criticism of the Soviet people, even if it is sometimes not fully and in all aspects correct.”<sup>5</sup> This call was cautious preparation for the persecution of members of the Bukharin group, who were at that time the “first persons” in the government, Comintern, trade unions and in the main party newspaper.

In assessing the “grain procurement crisis,” Stalin emphasized that this crisis was provoked by the first serious actions of capitalist elements in the village against Soviet power. In connection with this he declared that there could be no place in the party for people who feel that “NEP does not mean intensifying the struggle against capitalist elements, including the kulaks.” Finally, Stalin unequivocally warned that “if extraordinary circumstances arrive and capitalist elements once again begin to ‘be crafty,’ Article 107 will newly appear on the scene.”<sup>6</sup>

These guidelines were further developed in Stalin’s speech “On the Grain Front,” where he declared the following statements to be a “gross mistake” and an exaggeration of the planning component: “Our grain difficulties are accidental, a result only of poor planning, or a result only of a number of errors in balancing the economy.”<sup>7</sup> The way out of these difficulties was first publicly declared by Stalin to be the transition from individual peasant households to collective farms, capable of guaranteeing a sharp growth in the production of marketable grain. He called the collectivization of agriculture the essence of Lenin’s cooperative plan, which until that moment had been interpreted by the ruling faction primarily as directed at the development of cooperation in the realm of consumption, sales, supplies and credit.

These statements were the first, albeit indirect, attack against Bukharin. He, in turn, returned the favor during this period, condemning calls to “class war” in his speeches and articles, and denouncing advocates of “the industrial monster” that was acting as a parasite on agriculture.

Bukharin’s followers were even more outspoken; they condemned the Stalinists for trying to provoke the party into a collision with the peasantry; for refusing to develop individual peasant farms in favor of collectivization, based on the “impoverishment and ruination of the broad peasant masses”; and for seeing in the extraordinary measures “new party policy.” Thus, Valentin Astrof sharply criticized in *Pravda* unnamed “comrades” who “have begun to lose their way with the caricature of a slogan: ‘Onward to socialism with Article 107!’”<sup>8</sup>

In the course of the ever sharpening disagreements with Stalin, Bukharin insisted on a thorough discussion, at least within the framework of the Politburo, of the ways out of the looming economic crisis. Insofar as Stalin was avoiding such a discussion in every way, Bukharin tried to resolve these disagreements by means of personal notes to Stalin, which he only read out at the April Plenum of the Central Committee in 1929. In May 1928, Bukharin sent Stalin a letter in which he condemned Mikoyan's proposed intensification of the export of manufactured goods, capable only of deepening the commodity famine; he proposed to orient toward the export of agricultural produce in order to accelerate industrialization. Stalin agreed with this formulation of the question (which Bukharin himself renounced a few months later) and replied that Mikoyan was indeed incorrect, but "this is not so bad, since Mikoyan is not the one solving the problem here."<sup>9</sup>

Subsequent, more general disagreements between the duumvirs can be seen in the much more nervous letter sent by Bukharin to Stalin from 1–2 June 1928. This letter began with the words:

"Koba. I am writing to you rather than speaking to you, since it is too difficult for me to speak, and I fear that you will not hear me out to the end. But you will read a letter all the way through. I consider the domestic and foreign situation of the country to be very grave."

While noting that "our extraordinary measures (necessary) ideologically have already turned into, or grown over into a *new political line, different* from the line of the Fifteenth Congress," Bukharin assured Stalin that he was "not one bit frightened by a retreat even from the resolutions of the congress, if it is necessary." However he expressed concern that the Politburo had no integral plan, with the result that

"it has been acting worse than ultra-empiricists of the most vulgar type ... We have even stopped talking about these subjects: people are afraid to speak, no one finds it pleasant to swear at one another. But if even our central thought laboratory is destroyed, if we are unable to discuss the most important questions of policy in good conscience, without fear and suspicion, then the situation has become *dangerous*. The national economy is not an executive secretary. You cannot threaten to put him on trial, you can't shout at him."

After such troubled statements, however, assurances followed from Bukharin that "*I will not and do not want to fight*. I know too well what a fight might mean, especially in such difficult circumstances in which our nation and our party find themselves." Demonstrating the utmost dismay, Bukharin expressed a readiness, after the Comintern congress (the actual leader of which he continued to be), "*to go wherever you want*, without any fighting, without any noise and without any battle."<sup>10</sup>

Frumkin, the Deputy People's Commissar for Finance, raised the question of the growing signs of crises in the village much more sharply than Bukharin. On 15 June, Frumkin sent a letter to members of the Politburo in which he said: "We should not close our eyes to the fact that the countryside, with the exception of a small part of the village poor, are lined up against us." After citing Molotov's words: "We must hit the kulak in such a way that the middle peasant stretches out before us," Frumkin wrote that these words expressed the virtual introduction of a new political line, which

"has led the general masses of the middle peasants to a state of hopelessness and a lack of perspectives. Any stimulus to improving the farms, to improving either live or dead inventory, or productive livestock, is paralyzed by fear of being included among the kulaks. ... The declaration that the kulak is outside the law has led to lawlessness with regard to all the peasantry."

Frumkin proposed to return to the line that had been declared at the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Congresses; to open the bazaars; to raise the grain prices and fight against the kulak “by lowering his savings, by increasing his taxes,” but not by dekulakization. These ideas, as Frumkin stressed, were shared by hundreds and thousands of communists.<sup>[11](#)</sup>

Stalin sent out Frumkin’s letter to members of the Politburo, along with his own letter in which he resorted to a casuistic interpretation of quotations (characteristic of him), in order to prove that the policy of extraordinary measures was a development of the directives of the Fifteenth Congress.

The disagreements within the Politburo first came to the surface at the July 1928 Plenum of the Central Committee during discussion of Mikoyan’s report on the policy of grain procurements. In his speech at the plenum, Stalin not only stressed that “we cannot swear off once and for all using extraordinary measures,”<sup>[12](#)</sup> but added a “theoretical” justification for these measures by promoting the thesis about the intensification of class struggle as one advanced toward socialism. Since the resistance of the class enemy would grow, a “firm leadership” was necessary. This entire assortment of sophisms was assessed by Bukharin in his discussion with Kamenev (see Chapter 6) as the product of a “police mentality.”<sup>[13](#)</sup>

Bukharin was no less upset by the thesis first made public by Stalin at the plenum about the “tribute,” i.e. a “surplus tax” or an “overtax” on the peasantry, which “we must take temporarily in order to maintain and develop further the present tempo of developing industry.”<sup>[14](#)</sup> Stalin announced that the form of this “tribute” which had to be received from the peasantry was a “scissors” of prices for industrial and agricultural goods. The concept of a price “scissors” had been first introduced by Trotsky at the Twelfth Party Congress. One of the main economic ideas of the Left Opposition was the idea of closing the scissors through planned industrialization. Recalling this, Stalin reproached the Bukharinists because they, “like the Trotskyists,” wanted to “close the scissors” which “must exist for yet a long time.”<sup>[15](#)</sup>

As a counterweight to these propositions, Bukharin and his supporters spoke at the plenum about the mistakes of a “new course” in the countryside, the consequences of which had been the reduction of area sown by the peasants and a marked “disconnection” between the working class and peasantry. Bukharin called the mass peasant actions provoked by the introduction of extraordinary measures a particularly worrisome signal of the worsening relations with the middle peasant. He told the plenum that from the GPU reports which he studied carefully, he learned that in the first half of 1928, there were more than 150 peasant uprisings in the country.

Rykov admitted his own responsibility as chairman of the Sovnarkom for administrative pressure on the peasantry:

“I am one of the main people to blame for the events that have occurred. ... I personally was certain that administrative measures would lead to the liquidation of the grain crisis. This, unfortunately, did not happen.”<sup>[16](#)</sup>

The debates at the plenum became particularly sharp after a speech by Molotov, who said that not only the kulak was a danger, but also the middle peasant, who “had grown stronger and therefore had come into collision [with the party].” Tomskey said that this speech was a call to abandon NEP. In



response, Stalin accused Tomsky of thinking that “we have no reserves of any kind other than concessions to the peasantry in the countryside. This is capitulationism and failure to believe in the building of socialism.”<sup>17</sup>

Having encountered sharp opposition to his new course in the countryside, Stalin backed away from his recent directives about intensifying collectivization. When Uglanov called the counterposing of collective farms and individual farms a theoretical muddle, Stalin agreed: “Yes, it is a muddle,” and stressed that “small-scale farming will remain the basis for our production for a long time to come.” In his speech, he said that small-peasant agriculture had not exhausted all possibilities of future development, and that the task of uplifting individual farms remained the main task of the party, although it had already become insufficient for solving the grain problem and must be supplemented by the tasks of creating collective and state farms.<sup>18</sup>

It was decided not to carry the disagreements that had arisen at the plenum into party-wide discussions, but to try to overcome them “peacefully” within the Central Committee and Politburo. The unanimously adopted resolutions of the plenum pointed to the necessity of eliminating all recurrences of forced requisition and violations of legality; of raising the government’s purchase prices for grain; and of rejecting the application of extraordinary measures in the upcoming grain procurement campaign. All of these calming assurances were contained even in Stalin’s report about the results of the plenum.

Although, in decisive questions, the July 1928 plenum adopted the line proposed by the “rightists,” it had become a jolt which made the “troika” [of Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky] finally feel that Stalin was driving them into a new “opposition.” The acute and painful forms which the inner-party struggle had taken by this time within the limited framework of the Politburo, can be seen from an episode which occurred during the days of the plenum’s work, and which exerted an enormous influence on the further development of this struggle.

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1. *Pravda*, 3 October 1988.
  2. *Voprosy istorii*, 1991, № 2–3, p. 196.
  3. *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniiakh s’ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, 9th edition, vol. 4, M., 1984, pp. 317, 319.
  4. *Pravda*, 19 April 1928.
  5. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 31–33 [Stalin, *Works*, p. 34].
  6. *Ibid.*, pp. 45–47 [*Ibid.*, p. 50]. Article 107 was a law against speculation passed in 1926 by the Central Executive Committee (*translator*).
  7. *Ibid.*, p. 81 [*Ibid.*, p. 85].
  8. V. Astrov, “K tekushchemu momentu” [On the Current Moment], *Pravda*, 1 July 1928.
  9. N. I. Bukharin, *Problemy teorii i praktiki sotsializma* [Problems of the Theory and Practice of Socialism], M., 1989, pp. 300–301.
  10. *Ibid.*, pp. 298–299.
  11. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 26 December 1990.
  12. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, p. 174 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 182].



- [13.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1991, № 2–3, p. 196.
- [14.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, p. 159 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 167].
- [15.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1991, № 2–3, p. 195.
- [16.](#) *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1989, № 12, p. 84.
- [17.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1991, № 2–3, p. 196.
- [18.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 180, 185 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 189, 194]; *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, [Information of the CC of the CPSU], 1989, № 1, p. 126.

## 6. Bukharin's Negotiations with Kamenev

In June 1928, the six-month period expired that had been established by the Fifteenth Congress for declarations submitted by oppositionists who had renounced their views. Zinoviev and Kamenev were then re-admitted to the party. Soon after, a discussion took place between Bukharin and Kamenev that played almost a deciding role in the subsequent defeat of the Bukharin group.

By July 1928, Bukharin and his friends underwent an “epiphany,” although right until the end of the Fifteenth Congress in December 1927, they had acted in unison with Stalin. Much like in 1925, when Stalin had made a sharp turn within a few months with regard to his allies in the triumvirate, so, too, in 1928 he made a similar turn in an even shorter period with regard to his main comrades-in-arms in the fight against the Left Opposition. The staggering nature of this amazing metamorphosis by Stalin evidently explains one of the most illogical political steps made by Bukharin, who thereby gave Stalin for many years the main argument for accusing him of “double-dealing.” Having realized the danger of Stalin’s political adventurism and his personal treachery, Bukharin on his own initiative entered into negotiations with Kamenev, who only six months before had been thrown out of the party, with Bukharin’s active participation. The content of these negotiations was recorded on the very same day by Kamenev in the form of a report that was intended for Zinoviev.

Here is what the factual side of this episode looked like. On 9 July, Sokolnikov wrote a letter to Kamenev in Kaluga, where the latter was spending the final days of his exile. In the letter, Sokolnikov wrote that “battles” had begun at the Plenum of the Central Committee, and he asked Kamenev to immediately come to Moscow, since “I very much need to talk with you and seek your advice.”<sup>1</sup>



*Grigory Yakovlevich Sokolnikov*  
(1888–1939)

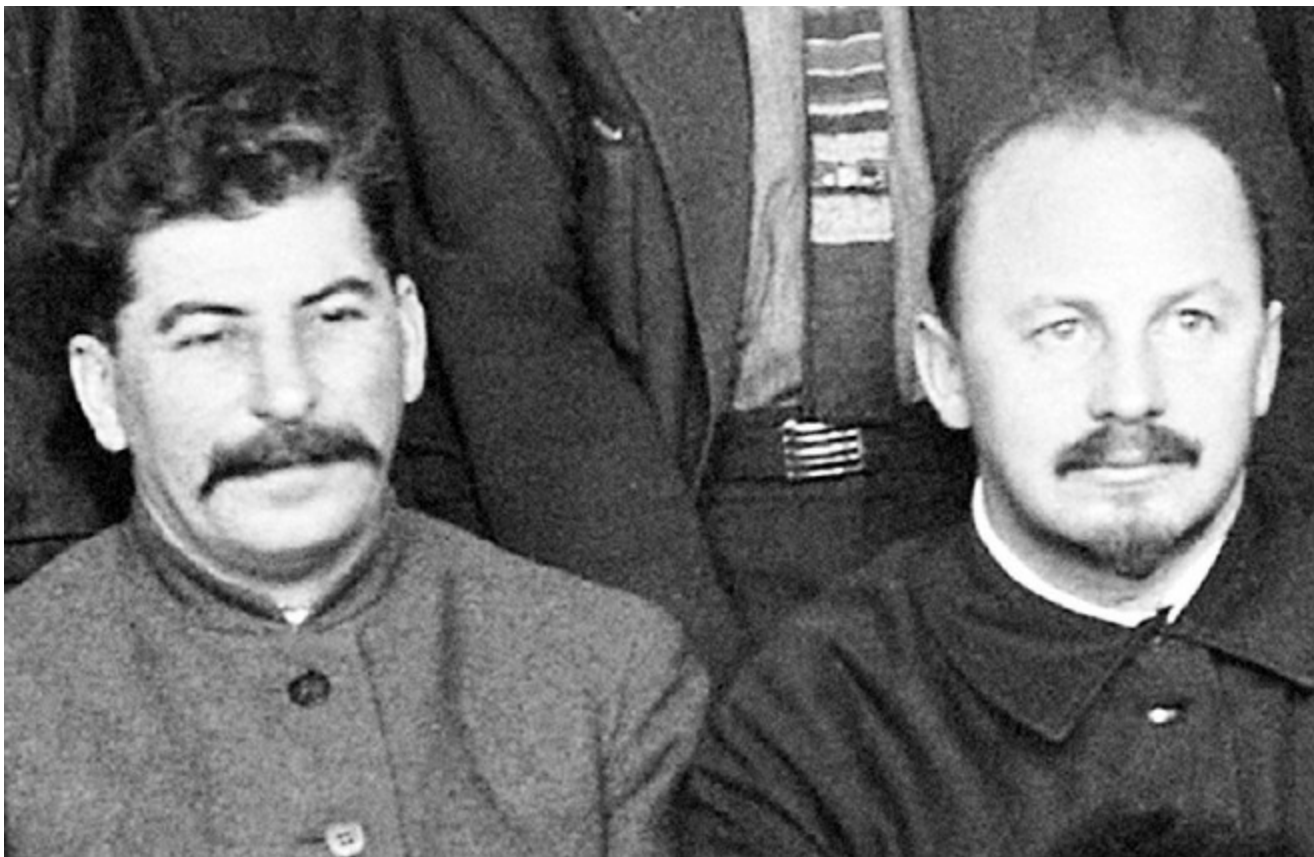


*Lev Borisovich Kamenev*  
(1883–1936)

Sokolnikov was the most appropriate person for re-establishing personal contact between Bukharin and Kamenev, which had broken off in the course of the inner-party struggle. On the one hand, he had belonged in the past to the “new Opposition,” and on the other, he had been a close comrade of Bukharin since high-school years.

On the morning of 11 July, Kamenev arrived in Moscow and immediately called Sokolnikov, who told him that Bukharin had definitively broken from Stalin and was “in a tragic position.” Having briefly described the character of the struggle at the plenum, Sokolnikov proposed that Kamenev enter into “a bloc to remove Stalin” and participate in coauthoring a positive program.<sup>2</sup>

An hour later, Bukharin and Sokolnikov came to see Kamenev. During the discussion, Kamenev was very restrained and mainly asked questions. Bukharin, on the contrary, outlined in detail his vision of the political situation in the country, explaining the disposition of forces within the Politburo and CC, and suggesting the possible course of further actions by his group.



*Iosif Stalin and Nikolai Bukharin*

Most of all, Kamenev was struck by the mood of “absolute hatred for and absolute rupture with” Stalin, which sounded like the main reason for Bukharin’s extremely nervous monologue. The sharpness of Bukharin’s characterizations of Stalin and his policies could only compare with Trotsky’s description of Stalin as the “grave-digger of the revolution.” Bukharin called Stalin Genghis Khan, and said that he was an unprincipled intriguer who subordinated everything to preserving his own power; he changed his ideas “for the sake of who had to be eliminated at any given moment.” Having stressed that “Stalin knows only one means — vengeance, and at the same time will stab you in the back,” Bukharin repeated several times in the course of the conversation that Stalin “will cut us to pieces.”<sup>3</sup>



*Lev Kamenev and Grigory Zinoviev*

To illustrate Stalin's treachery, Bukharin recounted the following episode. After he had long refused to accept Bukharin's proposal to discuss the situation in the country at a session of the Politburo, Stalin finally declared to Bukharin: "You and I are the Himalayas, the rest (of the Politburo members) are nonentities." When Bukharin, who was disturbed by these words, quoted them at a session of the Politburo, Stalin cried: "You're lying! You thought this up to turn the members of the PB against me."<sup>4</sup>

Shifting to a characterization of Stalin's political line, Bukharin said that it was fatal for the revolution and "is leading to a civil war. We might perish along with him." As if supplementing these comments, Sokolnikov cited Tomsky's words spoken to Stalin at one of their drinking bouts: "Our workers will begin to shoot at you."<sup>5</sup>

In formulating his political disagreements with Stalin more concretely, Bukharin said that Stalin was counting on "reintroducing extraordinary measures. And that means war communism and ruination." In response to Kamenev's questions about what alternative the Bukharin group had to this policy, Bukharin answered in the most general manner, once again reducing the discussion to personalities: "Perhaps, we will be forced to carry out a deeper maneuver in order to reconcile with the middle peasant. We can crush the kulak as much as we like, but we must bear with the middle peasant. But under Stalin and the blockhead Molotov, who teaches me Marxism and who we call 'stone ass,' nothing can be done."<sup>6</sup>

In response to Kamenev's question: "What kind of forces do you have?", Bukharin replied that "our potential forces are enormous," and named Rykov, Tomsky and Uglanov as his absolute supporters. In recounting his attempts to tear away other members of the Politburo from Stalin, he said that "Ordzhonikidze is no knight. He would come to me and swear at Stalin, but at the decisive



moment he has betrayed.” Voroshilov and Kalinin also “betrayed us at the last moment. I think that Stalin holds them in some kind of special chains.”<sup>7</sup>

After mentioning that the Leningrad members of the Central Committee were wavering, and Stalin had “bought” the Ukrainian members by removing Kaganovich from his post as General Secretary of the Central Committee of Ukraine, Bukharin said that nevertheless “the Orgburo is ours,” “Yagoda and Trilisser (actual leaders of the OGPU – *V. R.*) are ours” and “Andreev is behind us.”

Bukharin saw that his main political task was to “consistently explain (to members of the Central Committee – *V. R.*) Stalin’s fatal role and to induce the average Central Committee member to accept his removal.” When Kamenev noted: “But for now he is removing you,” Bukharin answered: “What can we do? Removing Stalin now will not happen in the CC ... Subjective conditions for removing Stalin in the CC are developing, but they have still not fully matured.”<sup>8</sup>

While seeming to play out variants before Kamenev of the further conduct of his group, Bukharin even spoke about the possible collective resignation of the “troika,” and about its resolve “not to become entangled in current politics, and when a crisis emerged, to speak directly and openly without reservations.” In the near future, he planned the publication in *Pravda* of his articles with an indirect criticism of Stalin. He also planned to publish Rykov’s report, in which “we will place all the dots on the i’s.”<sup>9</sup>

From Bukharin’s confused and semi-hysterical monologue, it is obvious that he had no precise and consistent political program or clear idea about what methods to use in fighting against Stalin. He was in a panic and in the grip of conflicting moods that followed one after the other. “At night I think, do we have the right to remain silent? Doesn’t this show a lack of courage? But calculation says: we must act cautiously.” And then in disarray, Bukharin uttered that at times he considered the situation of his group to be hopeless, and he would lose himself in search of solutions, fearing that any form of action would prove to be fatal for his group:

“1. If the country perishes (as a result of Stalin’s policy – *V. R.*), we will perish. 2. If the country finds a way out, and Stalin changes in time, then we will also perish. What can we do?”<sup>10</sup>

Bukharin did not dare to present disagreements with Stalin for party-wide discussion because “the CC fears discussion.” However, he himself feared an open discussion, insofar as he imagined what arguments, in that case, would be used by the opposing sides. The “troika” would be compelled to say about Stalin: “Here is a man who has led the country to famine and destruction,” and Stalin would reply by accusing them of defending the kulaks and NEPmen. Bukharin confessed that he even feared consistently opposing the application of extraordinary measures in the future, because in that case, “they will cut us to pieces with petty chessboard moves, and (Stalin), moreover will dump the blame (on us – *V. R.*), shift it on us, if there is no grain in October.” He did not dare to raise the differences with Stalin in their full measure even in discussion at the plenum of the CC, insofar as “in the CC they are terribly afraid of a split ... We do not want to speak as splitters, for then they will cut us to pieces.”<sup>11</sup>

Why in the world did Bukharin, who did not trust even the “average CC member,” who in his own words, “still does not understand the depth of the disagreements,” decide on the utmost openness with Kamenev, whom he had subjected to the most unbridled slander over several previous years in an alliance with Stalin? As became clear from Bukharin’s own explanations, what prompted this were rumors that Stalin wanted to return Zinoviev and Kamenev to party leadership in order to rely on their support in the struggle against “rightists” (“Stalin is spreading rumors that he has you in his pocket.”). Meanwhile Stalin was hiding his concrete intentions with regard to Zinoviev and Kamenev from his present opponents (“Stalin will try to ‘buy’ you with high appointments or he will appoint you to such places in order to book you in advance; we don’t know anything that is certain.”).<sup>12</sup>

In any case, Bukharin created the firm impression with Kamenev that, in the internecine struggle within the Politburo, both opposing forces were inclined to attract to their side the recently disgraced leaders of the “Leningrad opposition,” who had just capitulated. Bukharin directly stated that “the issue in the CC and the party has gone so far that you (and also, probably, the Trotskyists) will inevitably be drawn into it and you will play an important role in its resolution.” He even instilled certainty in Kamenev that such a “drawing in” would occur in the next two months, although, for the time being, “both sides are afraid of appealing to you.” Finally, this certainty was reinforced by Bukharin’s words to the effect that he knew (or assumed) that very soon Stalin would make contact with the disgraced leaders of the former opposition. “You, of course, as politicians, will use this situation to jack up the price, but I’m not afraid of that.” However, at that point Bukharin declared that “it would be terrible” if Zinoviev and Kamenev were to take Stalin’s side. “You, of course, will determine your own line,” Bukharin said in conclusion, “but I beg of you that you do not, with Stalin’s approval, help him to strangle us. ... I want you to know where things stand.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus, Bukharin’s goal in the discussion was, through an open description of the essence of the struggle within the Politburo that was carefully being concealed from the party, to prevent Kamenev and Zinoviev from supporting Stalin in this struggle.

Seeming to forget what abuse he had showered not long before on the leaders of the “Leningrad opposition,” and with what fervor he had defended Stalin from their criticism, Bukharin declared to Sokolnikov that he “now would give up Stalin for Kamenev and Zinoviev.” He spoke even more definitively before Kamenev himself: “The differences between us and Stalin are many times more serious than all the former disagreements we had with you. I, Rykov and Tomsy see the situation in this way: It would be much better if we now had Zinoviev and Kamenev instead of Stalin. I have been speaking absolutely candidly with Rykov and Tomsy about this.” All this led Kamenev to assess Bukharin’s dramatic about-face as “fawning. I can’t find another word: politically, of course.”<sup>14</sup>

Bukharin asked Kamenev not to tell anyone of their meeting, but at the same time “to tell your people not to attack us.” He proposed that they “meet secretly” for further negotiations and that Kamenev not telephone him, because “my phones are being monitored. The GPU follows me, and the GPU is standing outside your apartment.”<sup>15</sup>

Knowing well Stalin's treachery, and having just experienced the humiliating use of capitulations, Kamenev and Zinoviev were people from whom it would be highly naïve to expect that they would get involved in a dangerous struggle against Stalin, in an alliance with such a politically distraught and bewildered person as Bukharin. From his conversation with Kamenev, Bukharin achieved results that were directly opposed to what he had estimated. Experienced in the upper-echelon combinations begun in 1923 by the triumvirate (Zinoviev, Stalin and Kamenev), Kamenev seriously believed that the outcome of the present struggle in the Politburo would also be decided by such combinations. Stalin, like Bukharin, would



*Anna Mikhailovna Larina*  
(1914–1996)

earmark himself and Zinoviev for the role of an active force in this struggle. As a result of the conversation, he concluded that for the time being he should expect a similar move from Stalin, and therefore the best tactic would be to wait. "Everyone thinks," he said in finishing his report to Zinoviev, "that in the next few days signals should appear from the other camp ... This will happen ... Let us see what they say."<sup>16</sup>

After Kamenev became convinced that Stalin had not made such a move, he decided to use the record of the conversation with Bukharin in order to re-establish contact with the Trotskyists. In the fall of 1928, a copy of the "Transcript" that had been passed on to the latter ended up in Trotsky's hands.

Trotsky and his co-thinkers evaluated the contents of the transcript as evidence of the political degeneration of both groups in the Politburo, underestimating, however (neither for the first nor last time), Stalin's treachery and political cunning.

In her memoirs, Anna M. Larina [Bukharin's widow] pays much attention to the fateful episode of 1928. In evaluating the contents of the "Transcript," she writes that "I found in it everything that N. I. had told me (about the meeting with Kamenev – *V. R.*), and many more minor facts and details which I had not known. I do not consider myself sufficiently competent to judge about everything. But there is no doubt that the 'Transcript' correctly reflects both Bukharin's political views, and his attitude toward Stalin at that time, and the atmosphere then in the Politburo."<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile Larina expresses doubt about the correctness of several moments in the "Transcript," namely, Bukharin's announcement that Rykov and Tomsy were informed about his negotiations with Kamenev. In confirmation of these doubts, she cites Bukharin's conversation with Rykov in the early fall of 1928. She accidentally happened to be a witness of their discussion as a fourteen-year-old girl. An extremely agitated Rykov said that he had learned from Stalin about Bukharin's negotiations with

Kamenev. After Bukharin confirmed the fact of these negotiations, Rykov was so enraged that he shouted, stuttering more than usual: “You’re an old w-w-oman, and not a politician! B-b-before whom did you open your heart? Who’d you find to b-bare your soul to? Haven’t they (Kamenev and Zinoviev – *V. R.*) tormented you enough? Little b-b-oy Bukharchik!”<sup>18</sup>

This testimony was confirmed by Rykov’s declaration at the Sixteenth Party Congress in 1930: “When Bukharin’s conversation with Kamenev was being discussed (apparently, within the “troika” – *V. R.*), I reacted to this matter, to his conversation, with the greatest condemnation, and I said so immediately.”<sup>19</sup>

Larina expresses doubt (to be sure, not categorically) about the authenticity of Kamenev’s<sup>20</sup> “Transcript” on the grounds that, in it “one is struck by the confusion, the disconnected manner of elaboration that was quite uncharacteristic of Kamenev, whose literary abilities were well known.”<sup>21</sup> However, this “confusion” reflected better than anything else the character of Bukharin’s confession and his inner state. Kamenev expressly stated that Bukharin impressed him as an extremely shaken and exceedingly tormented person who was fully conscious that he was doomed.

Nor is it easy to agree with Larina’s supposition that the conversation between Bukharin, Sokolnikov and Kamenev occurred, not at Kamenev’s apartment, but in the Kremlin courtyard. Participants in such a prolonged, nervous and secret conversation would hardly have dared to conduct it in such a place.

There is evidence that the conversation mentioned in the transcript between Bukharin and Kamenev was not the only one, but was continued, first by telephone, and then at Kamenev’s apartment. Stalin was well informed about these negotiations, and by no means due to “Trotskyist sources.” There is one version that Bukharin talked with Kamenev by phone through the Kremlin ATS [telephone system], which had been monitored long before by Stalin and his agents. Larina herself recalls that Bukharin knew about such



*Aleksei Rykov and  
Nikolai Bukharin*

systematic surveillance. During his alliance with Bukharin, Stalin acquainted him with a recording of a telephone conversation between Zinoviev and his wife, in which political subjects were interspersed with highly personal and intimate ones. “The latter amused the ‘Master’ very much.”<sup>22</sup> Larina tells how “N. I. never could get rid of the horrifying impression made by Stalin’s story,”<sup>22</sup> but she does not relate how Bukharin reacted to Stalin’s cynical prank and to the very fact that he was



listening in on telephone conversations between other members of the Politburo.

When Bukharin learned that Stalin was familiar with the content of his conversation with Kamenev, he assumed that this was because Kamenev was an informer, for which he called him a traitor and a scoundrel. “Nikolai Ivanovich’s bitterness toward Kamenev, which had been born in 1928, never weakened ... In general, the episode of 1928 is a milestone in N. I.’s biography, not only because Stalin used it for his own purposes, but also because it sharply altered Bukharin’s character. ... N. I. felt that he had been betrayed (by Kamenev and Sokolnikov – *V. R.*), and was utterly demoralized by what had happened. From that time forth he became more withdrawn, and less trusting, even with relation to party comrades; among many of his colleagues, he began to be suspicious about people who were deliberately assigned to him ... He became easily wounded, and fell ill from the nervous strain.”<sup>23</sup>

Bukharin’s negotiations with Kamenev, which ended in no political agreement, proved to be beneficial in no small way to Stalin, and became one of the most lamentable episodes in Bukharin’s political biography.

After taking seriously Stalin’s blackmail, threatening to return Zinoviev and Kamenev to leading posts to reinforce his positions in the struggle against “rightists,” Bukharin turned for help to people from whom he least of all should have expected serious support. This episode clearly showed that Bukharin lacked the qualities necessary for a politician during sharp political crises. He had felt “on top of the world” when he shared power with Stalin and joined him in launching a Dreyfusiade, “the struggle against Trotskyism.” When, however, the time came to take independent political steps in extremely sharp circumstances and to answer for Stalin’s intrigues directed against himself, Bukharin revealed himself to be a vacillator, making ill-considered and impulsive decisions; in the end, he was politically bankrupt. With his negotiations with Kamenev, he drew fire upon himself, and gave Stalin a pretext for discrediting him as a “double-dealer.”

Stalin’s knowledge of the “Kamenev Transcript” had even more protracted and tragic consequences for Bukharin, predetermining to a large extent not only his political, but also his physical death. It showed Stalin that Bukharin was an enemy who was no less irreconcilable, although much weaker and unsteady (both in a political and psychological sense) than Trotsky. This could not help but give rise to a merciless hatred in Stalin for Bukharin, and distrust toward all his subsequent vows of friendship and personal devotion.

As for the part of the “Transcript” which mentioned anti-Stalin moods among several people in his closest circle, it was used by Stalin to blackmail these people in order to gain their full obedience and submission.

Given all this, in his reaction to the “Transcript” Stalin displayed in full measure his qualities as a “brilliant giver of small doses [*dozirovshchik*].” This expression, which explains best of all the psychological reasons for Stalin’s victory over his political opponents, was first made public by the Menshevik emigré Boris Nicolaevsky. He recalled that in a conversation with him in 1936, “Bukharin called Stalin a ‘great administrator of small doses,’ understanding by this that Stalin ‘brilliantly’ was



able to introduce into the organism such doses of his poison that, at the time, the party would perceive these doses to be correct ideas.”<sup>24</sup> Calling Stalin a “dose-giver” was used by Trotsky as well, who recalled that he first heard it in the 1920s from Kamenev. Trotsky felt that this characterization “has in mind Stalin’s ability to carry out his plan bit by bit and in installments. This possibility assumes, in turn, the presence of a powerful centralized apparatus. The task of the dosage consists in gradually luring the apparatus and public opinion of the country into other undertakings, which, if considered at once in their full scale, would provoke fear, indignation and even open resistance.”<sup>25</sup>

While carefully administering his policy in small doses even in the given case, Stalin used the negotiations between Bukharin and Kamenev to accuse them of a secret conspiracy, obtaining confirmation of this version from them not only at the trials of 1936–1938, but even much earlier. In a speech at the Seventeenth Congress in 1934, Kamenev spoke of an attempt to create a “right-Trotskyist bloc” in 1928. He declared that the development of this bloc was impeded by the “vigilance of the party’s Central Committee, and the theoretical steadfastness of its leader, comrade Stalin.”<sup>26</sup>

In the summer of 1928, when the alignment of forces in the CC had not yet been finally determined, and Bukharin’s authority in the party and Comintern was still very high, Stalin tried to not allow any information beyond the bounds of the Politburo about disagreements that existed within it. Therefore he supported Bukharin’s request that all members of the Politburo sign a declaration to the Council of Elders at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, which expressed the most resolute protest “against the spreading of any rumors about disagreements among members of the Politburo of the CC of the VKP(b).”<sup>27</sup>

Immediately after the completion of the July Plenum of 1928, Stalin launched a new round in the struggle against Bukharin and his supporters — for supremacy in the Comintern, i.e., in the entire international communist movement.

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1. *Voprosy istorii* [Problems of History], 1991, № 2–3, p. 195.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., pp. 196, 198.

4. Ibid., p. 198.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 196.

7. Ibid., pp. 196, 198.

8. Ibid., pp. 196, 197.

9. Ibid., p. 196.

10. Ibid., p. 197.

11. Ibid., p. 196.

12. Ibid., p. 197.

13. Ibid.

- [14.](#) Ibid., pp. 196–197.
- [15.](#) Ibid.
- [16.](#) Ibid., p. 197.
- [17.](#) *Znamia*, 1988, № 11, p. 119.
- [18.](#) Ibid.
- [19.](#) *XVI s"ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov). Stenograficheskii otchet*, [Sixteenth Congress of the VKP(b) Stenographic Report], M., 1930, p. 149.
- [20.](#) Having spoken with Bukharin in 1936, the Menshevik Nicolaevsky wrote a few decades later: “Bukharin himself confirmed to me the truthfulness of the conversation with Kamenev ... but, it is true, with the proviso that the transcript was slipshod.” (*Voprosy istorii*, 1991, № 2–3, p. 183).
- [21.](#) *Znamia*, 1988, № 11, p. 121.
- [22.](#) Ibid., p. 120.
- [23.](#) Ibid., p. 124.
- [24.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1991, № 2–3, p. 191.
- [25.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin*, vol. II, p. 158.
- [26.](#) *XVII s"ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov). Stenograficheskii otchet*, M., 1934, p. 518.
- [27.](#) *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniiakh*, vol. 4, pp. 438–439.

# 7. Stalin's Victory in the Comintern

The Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, which opened on 17 July 1928, lasted six weeks. It adopted the Program and Statutes of the Communist International, which stated that this organization was a “unified world communist party.”<sup>1</sup> In each country, according to the statutes, there could be only one communist party which was called a section of the Comintern. The Program established strict centralization of the leadership of the communist parties and demanded “international communist discipline,” which should be expressed “in unconditional execution by all communists of the decisions made by the leading bodies of the Communist International.”<sup>2</sup>

The Sixth Congress developed the strategic directive adopted at the previous, Fifth Congress in 1924, which had taken place under the leadership of Zinoviev. According to this directive, in capitalist countries the communists were opposed by two equally hostile political forces: openly reactionary (fascism) and democratic-reformist (Social-Democracy). This line rejected the possibility of an alliance between communists and Social-Democratic parties, thereby deepening the split in the international workers' movement.

This line was affirmed at the Ninth Plenum of the ECCI in February 1928, which was guided by the thesis formulated by Stalin at the end of 1927 that “Europe is obviously entering a period of new revolutionary upsurge.”<sup>3</sup> In correspondence with notions about the sharp leftward movement of the masses in capitalist countries, the line of a “left turn” of the Comintern was elaborated. The resolutions of the plenum noted that the upcoming period of development in the workers movement “would be marked by a harsh struggle between Social-Democracy and communists for influence over the working-class masses.” Also noted was the particularly dangerous role played by leaders of the “left wing” of Social-Democracy, which supposedly was camouflaging its struggle against the Soviet Union with “hypocritical phrases expressing sympathy for it.”<sup>4</sup> Communists were prohibited from participating in joint political actions with Social-Democrats; entering into pre-election blocs with Social-Democratic parties, which were declared to be “bourgeois workers' parties;” or voting for candidates of these parties in elections. The tasks of communists in trade unions under the influence of Social-Democrats was reduced to breaking away individual groups of workers from them. The conditions for collaboration between rank-and-file communists and social-democrats were that the latter break from the organizations to which they belonged and accept a purely communist platform. Thus the tactic of a united workers' front was unequivocally rejected.

The turn to ultra-left sectarianism was confirmed at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, where Bukharin delivered three main reports.

Before the congress, Stalin made significant changes to the draft program of the Comintern prepared by Bukharin. As a result, the draft presented to the delegates appeared beneath the signatures of Bukharin and Stalin. Thrown out of the text of the Bukharin draft were sentences about

the various ways of building socialism in different countries and about the need for sections of the Comintern to take into account the peculiarities of the situation in their own countries.

In his conversation with Kamenev, Bukharin complained:

“Stalin ruined the program for me in many places. He himself wanted to give the report on the program at the plenum. I fought him off with great difficulty. He is consumed with a desire to become a renowned theoretician. He feels that this is the only thing he lacks.”<sup>5</sup>



*Rykov, Stalin and Bukharin*

Nevertheless, in his reports at the congress, Bukharin basically defended views that did not differ from Stalin's. He confirmed that capitalist stabilization was “rotting,” and that an extreme sharpening of the contradictions of capitalism “was leading to a great collapse, to a great catastrophe.”<sup>6</sup>

Bukharin spoke in unison with Stalin's assertions that “Social-Democracy is ... the main buttress of capitalism in the working class in the matter of preparing new wars and interventions,” and it was the “chief enemy of communism.”<sup>7</sup> He said that communists “had still not learned to work well in order to more decisively, and with great success, break the back of this enemy of ours.”<sup>8</sup> Declaring that the contradictions between communists and Social-Democracy were antagonistic, Bukharin confirmed: “In the majority of cases, we must conduct the tactic of the united front only from below. There must be no appeals to the centers of the Social-Democratic parties.”<sup>9</sup>

In the discussion of Bukharin's report, many delegates reinforced the old Zinoviev-Stalin thesis about “social-fascism,” by declaring that Social-Democracy was becoming a weapon of the “distinctive fascization of the workers' movement.”

Such assessments and prognoses, which had nothing in common with reality and represented the most vulgar disorientation of the communist parties in the given political situation, were subjected to an attempted criticism by only a tiny segment of the congress, e.g., the Italian delegation headed by

Palmiro Togliatti. Addressing the thesis about the transformation of Social-Democracy into a “fascist workers’ party,” Togliatti declared: “Our delegation is resolutely opposed to this blurring of reality.”<sup>10</sup>

In his concluding remarks regarding the report on the Program of the Comintern, Bukharin adopted an intermediate position on this question. Having declared that “social-fascist tendencies are inherent in Social-Democracy,” he also warned that “it would be unreasonable to throw Social-Democracy into the same heap with fascism. This should not be done either in analyzing the situation, or in planning communist tactics.”<sup>11</sup>

Although the thesis of “social-fascism” did not make it into the Program of the Comintern, both the program and other documents adopted by the congress contained statements that Social-Democracy, at the most critical moments for capitalism, frequently plays a fascist role, and its ideology at many points comes into contact with fascist ideology.<sup>12</sup>

The disagreements between Stalin and Bukharin arose only over the question of the attitude toward the left wing of Social-Democracy. At Stalin’s insistence, the delegation of the VKP(b) at the congress introduced an amendment to Bukharin’s theses which supplemented them with a point about the “special danger” presented by the left Social-Democrats, that is, of that part which was most favorably inclined to the Soviet Union and the communist movement, and which was most likely to be in agreement on a principled basis. The adoption of this amendment led to the introduction of the following sentences into the documents of the Comintern:

“By systematically conducting ... counter-revolutionary policy, Social-Democracy operates with two wings: the right wing of Social-Democracy, openly counter-revolutionary, is needed for negotiations and immediate contact with the bourgeoisie; the left wing for particularly sophisticated deception of the workers. ‘Left’ Social-Democracy, playing with pacifist, and sometimes even revolutionary phraseology ... is therefore the most dangerous faction of the Social-Democratic parties.”<sup>13</sup>

Proceeding from this analysis, communists were directed “to expose the ‘left’ Social-Democratic leaders, in the most decisive manner, as the most dangerous purveyors of bourgeois politics in the working class.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, the communist parties of capitalist countries were saddled with orders to sharpen the struggle against the political force closest to them; collaboration with this force might have created the basis for a united workers’ front and a broad anti-fascist coalition.

Besides the amendment about the attitude toward left Social-Democracy, the delegation of the VKP(b) introduced about twenty other amendments to Bukharin’s theses, including a point about the need for “iron discipline in the communist parties.” This amendment replaced Bukharin’s statement about the need to “overcome disagreements on a normal party basis by methods of inner-party democracy.”<sup>15</sup> In the eyes of the foreign communist parties, the presence of so many amendments placed in doubt Bukharin’s authority as the outstanding leader and theoretician of the Comintern.

Bukharin himself only indirectly opposed the elimination of democratic discussions and the attempt to drive out independently thinking people from the communist parties. In connection with this, he cited a sentence from an unpublished letter from Lenin to himself and Zinoviev:

“If you are going to drive out all people who are intelligent, but not particularly submissive, and leave around yourselves only submissive fools, then you will certainly destroy the party.”



“I think,” noted Bukharin, “that comrade Lenin’s opinion is absolutely correct.”<sup>16</sup>

The attempt to introduce even more broadly into the work of the Comintern methods of cutting off dissident thinkers and eliminating all discussions was condemned in a number of other speeches at the congress. “These methods,” said Togliatti, “might acquire their own inner logic, and also, despite our will, this logic often leads to disintegration, right up to the scattering of the leading forces of our parties.”<sup>17</sup> Arthur Ewert, a member of the delegation from the German Communist Party, noted anxiously:

“With every disagreement, with every attempt to discuss practical issues, one encounters a tendency, without any preliminary explanations, to attach a definite label on comrades who think differently, instead of resolving the issue through discussion.”<sup>18</sup>

However, Stalin’s interpretation of “iron discipline” triumphed at the congress. An even more serious victory for Stalin was the implementation of changes he wanted in the composition of a new leadership in the Comintern. In a letter to Piatnitsky, the secretary of the delegation from the VKP(b) at the congress, Stalin proposed to assemble a political secretariat of the ECCI (the collective organ replacing the chairman of the Comintern since 1926) in such a way as to guarantee an “overwhelming counterweight” in it to “rightist” tendencies. One person included in the political secretariat was Molotov, who had virtually become Stalin’s “political commissar” under Bukharin, and “Stalin’s cudgel” in dealing harshly with “rightists” and “conciliators” in the leadership of the Comintern and its sections.

After the congress, the apparatus of the Comintern was under Stalin’s full control. All communist parties established a regime resembling the Soviet inner-party regime. Any foreign communist who expressed doubt about the correctness of Stalin’s leadership, or his policy in the USSR and in the international communist movement, was doomed to be driven from the ranks of his party.

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1. *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional v dokumentakh. 1919–1932*, M., 1933, p. 46.

2. *Ibid.*

3. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 10, p. 286 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 10, p. 293]

4. *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional v dokumentakh*, pp. 747, 748.

5. *Voprosy istorii*, 1991, № 2–3, p. 195.

6. *Stenograficheskii otchet VI Kongressa Kominterna*, Vyp. 1, M.-L., 1929, pp. 34–35.

7. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 201, 204 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 210, 213].

8. *Stenograficheskii otchet VI Kongressa Kominterna*, Vyp. 1, p. 3.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

10. *Voprosy istorii*, 1989, № 8, p. 22.

11. *Stenograficheskii otchet VI Kongressa Kominterna*, Vyp. 3, pp. 144–145.

12. *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional v dokumentakh*, pp. 12, 778.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 777.

15. *Voprosy istorii*, 1989, № 8, p. 20.

[16.](#) *Stenograficheskii otchet VI Kongressa Komintern*, Vyp. 1, p. 614.

[17.](#) Ibid., p. 508.

[18.](#) Ibid., p. 380.

## 8. Stalin Discovers a “Right Deviation”

Immediately after the Sixth Congress, disagreements in the Politburo once again shifted to questions of domestic policy. The epicenter of these disagreements was now the problem of tempos and methods of industrialization in the USSR.

In the economic year of 1927/1928, the period of restoring the national economy was completed. Throughout this period, industry worked mainly on the basis of pre-revolutionary equipment, and agriculture on old inventory. In the prelude to a transition to the technological reconstruction of the entire economy, Trotsky made a prognosis in 1925 that, after the completion of the restoration period, industrial production would grow annually by no less than 15–18 percent. In the first variant of the Five-Year Plan approved by the Politburo in 1927, the growth of industrial production was set, with a rate decreasing from year to year — from 9 to 4 percent. “On the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, to present such a meager, thoroughly pessimistic plan,” the counter-theses of the opposition said to the Fifteenth Congress, “means in fact to work against socialism.”<sup>1</sup>

In their approach to the tasks of industrialization, the designers of the Five-Year Plan were guided by the theses formulated by Stalin at the Fourteenth Congress in 1925, according to which the transition to the technological re-equipment of production and the building of new factories required a decrease in the tempos of development in industry because of insufficient capital investment.<sup>2</sup> This directive was confirmed in the resolution of the Fifteenth Congress, which underscored “the danger of too great an integration of state capital investment in large-scale construction.”<sup>3</sup> The resolutions of the congress did not contain figures foreseen in the initial projections prepared by Gosplan and the VSNKh for the first Five-Year Plan. In his report at the congress, Stalin gave a somewhat higher figure — 12 percent — of yearly total growth in industrial production than the numbers contained in these projections.

Although the first year of the Five-Year Plan began on 1 October 1928, the control figures continued to be worked over in Gosplan right up until April 1929. Lacking a plan for the first five years, the Politburo proceeded to discuss the control figures for its first year, which should have formed the basis for current economic policy. In the course of this discussion, the Stalin group abruptly changed its former directives on the question of the tempos of industrial development by demanding their substantial increase.

Worried by this new strategy of the Stalinists, Bukharin made an attempt to draw the party at least partially into a discussion of his disagreements with them by publishing on 30 September 1928 in *Pravda* an extensive article, “Notes of an Economist. Toward the Beginning of a New Economic Year.” In it he stressed that party theory did not give an answer to “urgent and ‘painful’ questions that were gnawing at the minds of very many people.”<sup>4</sup>

Bukharin declared that the lagging of production behind the growth of demand was a peculiar advantage of socialist economy, an indication that “society is really making the transition to socialism, that the growth of consumption is the *immediate* driving force of its economic development, that production is becoming a *means*...” Despite the subsequent criticism of Bukharin’s basic ideas, this Bukharinist thesis remained for many years in the arsenal of Stalinist and post-Stalinist political economy, which continued, in fact, to proceed from Bukharin’s position. He asserted that “production is always catching up with the consumption of the masses; consumption forges ahead and is the basic stimulus of all development.”<sup>5</sup>

The main thrust of “Notes of an Economist” consisted in a warning against excessively high tempos of industrial development. To criticize the positions of the Stalin faction in this question, Bukharin chose what would seem to be an infallible and often tested device. On the surface, he directed his indignation at “Trotskyism,” using for this purpose Trotsky’s declaration to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, which, of course, had not been published in the Soviet press. After calling this declaration “an unbelievably slanderous and hysterical” document, Bukharin reacted with particular rage against Trotsky’s proposition that increasing the tempos of industrialization was necessary primarily for overcoming the gap between industrialization and the market demands of the countryside.

“Despite its incomparably higher technological and productive type, in comparison with agriculture, our industry has not only not grown into a leading and transformative, i.e., genuinely socialist role with regard to the villages, but does not even satisfy today’s commodity and market demands, thereby *holding back* the development of the countryside.”<sup>6</sup>

As it was not difficult to see, Bukharin’s angry attack on these ideas masked a criticism of Stalin, who had by that time removed significant resources from agriculture (through extraordinary measures, and price and tax policy) for the sake of a sharp increase in capital investments in industry. Understanding the situation all too well, Stalin had the Politburo adopt a resolution stating that, in light of the presence of debatable positions in “Notes of an Economist,” the editors of *Pravda* should not have published this article without the knowledge of the Politburo. Even before this resolution, Bukharin’s pupils, Slepkov, Astrov and Maretsky, had been removed from the editorial board of *Pravda* and replaced by Stalin’s “political commissars,” Krumin and Saveliev.

Through the newly renovated *Pravda*, Stalin began to inform the party about the presence within it of a “right deviation,” an as yet somewhat faceless ideological tendency. On 18 September 1928, *Pravda* published a lead article inspired by Stalin: “The Comintern on the Struggle against Right Deviations.” Before its publication, Bukharin objected strongly to a number of its propositions. He proposed to explain the “useful idea” about a right deviation in the sense that this deviation represented a tendency toward the bureaucratic degeneration of several links in the apparatus trying to reduce politics to naked administrative procedures. However, the article was published in its initial form, reflecting Stalin’s interpretation of the right deviation.

From that time, *Pravda*, and other press organs in its wake, launched a thunderous campaign against the “right deviation.” In *Pravda* alone, from 10 October 1928 to 18 November 1929 (the day

an announcement was made about the November plenum of the Central Committee which had routed the “Bukharinists”), there were more than 150 articles on this subject. Although, from the end of 1928 to the beginning of 1929, Bukharin still published his individual articles in *Pravda* with an indirect polemic against Stalin, the party’s main newspaper became the ideological mouthpiece of the policy of Stalin’s group.

Stalin himself first outlined his understanding of a “rightist danger” in a report specially devoted to this subject at the October 1928 plenum of the Moscow Committee [MC] and Moscow Control Commission [MCC]. The fact that this forum had been selected for criticism of the “right deviation” was by no means accidental. From the beginning of 1928, the leaders of the Moscow Committee of the VKP(b), headed by Nikolai Uglanov, had been speaking out against the extraordinary measures and forced tempos of industrialization. The possibility had arisen of an “alliance” between the Bukharin group and the leaders of the Moscow party organization — which was the main base of support for the ruling faction in its struggle against the Left Opposition.

From March to July of 1928, on the initiative of the leadership of the MC, there were several meetings with Stalin at which Uglanov and his supporters evaluated the situation in the country as critical, and expressed their concern over the new economic course being pursued by the Central Committee. These questions were raised even more sharply by the leaders of the Moscow organization at plenums of the MC. In the fall of 1928, Stalin went on a counter-offensive. At the September plenum of the MC and MCC, the leadership of the capital’s organization was accused of “covering up the rightist danger.” This was followed in Moscow by a wave of party conferences and meetings of party activists devoted to the struggle against the “rightist threat.”

At the same time, Stalin held personal meetings with leaders of the MC and MCC, as well as first secretaries of the capital’s district committees of the party, whom he tried to draw over to his side. The sharpness of these discussions is shown by the testimony of the daughter of M. N. Riutin, a member of the bureau of the MC and first secretary of the Krasnopresenskaya district committee. According to her recollections, after a meeting with Stalin, Riutin came home angry and upset, and kept repeating the same phrase: “Where did he come from? It is actually true that this cook will prepare very spicy dishes.”<sup>7</sup> This description of Stalin, which was made by Lenin in a narrow circle after Stalin was elected general secretary, was well-known in the party, since it had often been cited by Trotsky during the inner-party struggle in 1926–1927.

Through behind-the-scenes intrigues, Stalin had been spreading rumors about Uglanov and other leaders of the Moscow party organization as “rightists” who were conducting a struggle against the Central Committee. To a certain degree Uglanov responded to these rumors when he published a letter in *Pravda*, “To All Members of the Moscow Organization of the VKP(b) About Upcoming Tasks.” Along with demands to strengthen the fight against “remnants of the Trotskyist opposition” and rightist elements who saw no kulak danger, the letter contained a demand for freedom of inner-party criticism and an end to methods in which “independent thought and a critical comment would be discarded in advance as a ‘deviation’ or ‘scandal-mongering,’ etc.”<sup>8</sup>

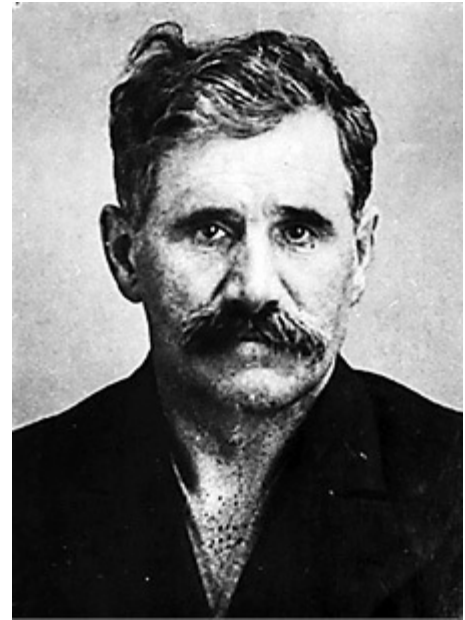


This letter from Uglanov, which had been unanimously approved at the bureau of the MC, served as the reason for calling several meetings of the MC, at which Uglanov and the leaders of the district party organizations in Moscow who supported him were accused of having a “conciliatory attitude” toward the right deviation. Next came an extraordinary plenum of the MC and MCC which was held on 18–19 October 1928. At the beginning of its work, Uglanov declared that the attempt to “depict us, old Bolsheviks, ... as opportunists, as political bankrupts, — this, comrades, will not pass.” While acknowledging the importance of the question of the rightist danger, he stressed that it was even more important to “provide a program and clearly illuminate the tasks of our economic construction,” and focus attention on the development of inner-party democracy.<sup>9</sup>

On the next day Stalin came to the plenum and delivered a wide-ranging report in which he identified the basic signs of a “right deviation”: statements opposed to the struggle against the kulak and in favor of lowering the tempos of industrialization. In doing so he presented the issue in such a way that the danger lay in the ideology itself, and not in its concrete manifestations.

When it came to demands by the plenum’s delegates to name the bearers of the “right danger,” he declared that such “bearers” had been uncovered in lower-echelon party organizations during the grain procurement crisis and had been purged from the party at that time. However, they could still be found “if you dig around pretty well in the soviet and cooperative apparatus,” in district and provincial party organizations. As for the Central Committee, then, according to Stalin, it contained only “a few, to be sure, of the most insignificant elements of a conciliatory attitude toward the right danger,” but “in the Politburo we have neither rightists, nor ‘leftists,’ nor compromisers with them.” On the basis of this assertion, Stalin “categorically” demanded “an end to the slanders spread by those who wish the party ill, and by all kinds of oppositionists, about the presence of a right deviation or a conciliatory attitude toward it in the Politburo of our CC.”<sup>10</sup>

According to the logic of Stalin’s report, rightist “waverings and vacillations” had been felt most of all in the “upper echelon” of the Moscow organization. In this regard, Stalin supported “the self-criticism from below” of the district organizations of Moscow which, in his words, had been demanding that these “vacillations” be overcome. Given this state of affairs, several leading officials of the MC were compelled to acknowledge their “errors” at the plenum. In a decree of the plenum, the leadership of the MC was accused of “not posing clearly the questions of a right danger, insufficiently resisting the right deviation and having a conciliatory attitude toward it.”



*Nikolai A. Uglanov*  
(1886–1937)

Several leaders of the Moscow organization were dismissed as members of the bureau of the MC. A month later, it was Uglanov's turn, as well as Kotov's, the second secretary of the MC, who were replaced by Molotov and Bauman. In addition, the secretaries of several Moscow district committees were removed from their posts.

The entirety of this purge occurred under conditions when rumors continued to circulate among Moscow communists about disagreements in the upper levels of the party. At the end of 1928, speakers at party meetings often received notes with questions: "Tell us what disagreements there are in the Politburo and how are they reflected in the solving of complex issues in party policy?" "Tell us how serious the argument was between Stalin and Bukharin at the plenum, and why did it take place?"<sup>11</sup>

All attempts by the most radically inclined "rightists" from the Moscow organization to lure their "leaders" into resisting Stalin's purges were not crowned with success. In September 1928, when Riutin declared to Tomsy that a party discussion was needed, the latter gave him no reply other than to crack a joke: "I see the sole head of the Moscow organization who has not lost his head." Sometime later, Riutin, Uglanov and Kulikov visited the ailing Bukharin, whom they found in a state of complete demoralization. In response to their request to advise them how to proceed further, Bukharin, according to Riutin, "began crying and spoke in a very negative way about Stalin's policies. 'I now feel myself literally smeared from head to foot in shit,' he said, and once again burst into tears ... So we didn't receive any advice from comrade Bukharin."<sup>12</sup>

The purge of the Moscow apparatus, the main base of support for the Bukharin group, that had successfully been carried out by the Stalinists preceded the November 1928 plenum of the CC, which was to discuss the question of control figures for the 1928/29 economic year. While this question was being prepared in a commission of the Politburo, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy resigned, but soon retracted their resignation and agreed to maximum taxation of the kulak and a plan for high tempos of industrial development. The charge that Bukharin had first made against the majority of the Politburo of conducting a policy of military-feudal exploitation of the peasantry was "rejected to the accompaniment of general laughter by members of the Commission." Stalin then achieved unanimous acceptance of the resolution on control figures, as well as a proposal that "all members of the Politburo declare that, both at the November plenum of the CC, as well as outside the plenum, there has been unity and an absence of differences within the Politburo."<sup>13</sup> Thus the November plenum of the CC, in contrast to the previous July plenum, passed in a "tranquil" atmosphere; rank-and-file members of the CC did not learn about the disagreements in the Politburo that were continuing to sharpen.

Not long before the plenum, the question of the tempos of industrialization was discussed at a session of the Sovnarkom, where Rykov tried to defend the thesis of preserving market equilibrium. In response to this, Kuibyshev, the chairman of the VSNKh [Supreme Council of the National Economy], declared that the "discrepancy between demand and supply is pushing industry toward rapid development; it is testimony to the growth of well-being as a stimulus to industrialization."<sup>14</sup> Thus

Kuibyshev was using for his polemic with Rykov one of the main theses of Bukharin's article, "Notes of an Economist."

The November plenum heard the reports of Rykov, Krzhizhanovsky and Kuibyshev, which reinforced the orientation toward a sharp increase in capital investment in heavy industry. This orientation, just like the attribution of economic difficulties to the "furious resistance" by the kulak and NEPman, was supported by all the participants at the plenum.

Stalin delivered a speech at the plenum "On Industrialization of the Country and the Right Deviation in the VKP(b)," which was published in *Pravda* on 24 November 1928. In this speech he said that the Right deviation "cannot yet be seen as something that is fully formed and crystallized, although it is growing stronger in the party. It is only taking shape and crystallizing." Stalin declared that "the basic method of fighting with the Right deviation *at this stage* should be that of a full-scale ideological struggle," and reproached some members of the CC "for having an unrestrained desire to remove certain spokesmen of the Right deviation from their posts as quickly as possible. But that does not solve the problem, dear comrades."<sup>15</sup>

Pursuing a tactic he had already developed well — to conceal differences in the Politburo from rank-and-file members of the CC until the most advantageous moment for him — Stalin declared at the plenum the absolute falsehood "of rumors to the effect that in the Politburo we have a Right deviation, a 'Left' deviation, conciliation and the devil knows what else." Referring to the unanimous acceptance of the theses on the control figures, Stalin dramatically exclaimed: "Let these theses serve as one more proof, the hundredth or hundred and first, that we are all united in the Politburo."<sup>16</sup>

As the main target in order to demonstrate the "physiognomy" of the Right deviation, Stalin chose Frumkin, who had sent a new letter to the CC in November in which he spoke of the inevitable deterioration of agriculture given the continuation of the existing policy in the countryside. The focus of Stalin's criticism became Frumkin's statements that "the village, with the exception of a small portion of the village poor, is inclined to be against us"; that "the orientation taken in recent times has left the main mass of middle peasants without hope and without prospects"; that it would be wrong "to expand state farms by means of shock or super-shock methods"; and that "we must not hamper production on the kulak farms either, while at the same time fighting against their enslaving exploitation."<sup>17</sup> Although these statements were clearly connected to the ideas in "Notes of an Economist," Stalin not only remained silent about his attitude to Bukharin's article, but even declared:

"Frumkin generally loves to hang onto the coat tails of some member or other of the Politburo in order to substantiate his own point of view. It is quite possible that in this case, too, he will try to grab onto Bukharin's coat tails, in order to show that Bukharin says 'the same thing' in his article 'Notes of an Economist.' But Bukharin by no means says 'the same thing.' In his article, Bukharin raised the abstract, theoretical question about the possibility or the danger of deterioration. Speaking abstractly, it is completely legitimate and possible to pose such a question. But what is Frumkin doing? He is turning the abstract question about the possibility of the deterioration of agriculture into a *fact*."<sup>18</sup>

Using, as before, his favorite tactic of "a struggle on two fronts," Stalin criticized not only the "Right danger" at the plenum, but also mentioned the danger of tendencies toward "super-industrialization" and toward the transformation of extraordinary measures into a permanent course in

the party. In doing so, he naturally attributed these tendencies to “Trotskyism.”<sup>19</sup> In this portion of his speech, Stalin essentially refuted his many previous declarations about the “insignificance of Trotskyist forces,” based on falsified data about voting in the discussion prior to the Fifteenth Congress. When he named the official figure, according to which less than four thousand people voted against the platform of the CC, a voice rang out from the hall: “ten thousand.” Stalin not only agreed with this correction, but then added:

“I think that, if ten thousand voted against, then twice ten thousand members of the party sympathetic to Trotskyism didn’t vote at all, since they didn’t come to the meetings. These are the same Trotskyist elements who did not leave the party and who, we must assume, have still not freed themselves of Trotskyist ideology. In addition, I think that some of the Trotskyists who later broke from the Trotskyist organization and returned to the party, have not yet managed to take leave of Trotskyist ideology and also, it must be, are not against spreading their views among party members. Finally, there is the fact of a certain rebirth of Trotskyist ideology in some of the organizations of our party. If you bring all this together, then you have all the necessary elements for having a deviation toward Trotskyism in our party.”<sup>20</sup>

Despite the thesis introduced into party life about the Right danger as the most important at this stage, Stalin understood very well that the main danger for him actually continued to be the “Trotskyists,” who for the most part were not inclined to engage in “rotten compromises” as easily as the “Rightists.” Although Stalin had declared at the plenum: “It is one thing to arrest the Trotskyist cadres or expel them from the party. It is another thing to finish off the ideology of Trotskyism. This will be more difficult,”<sup>21</sup> he by no means intended to take the second, “difficult” path — the struggle against “Trotskyism” by ideological means. In turn, the majority of “Trotskyists,” despite all the increasingly harsh police repressions, did not display any inclination to capitulate before Stalin.

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1. *Pravda*, 17 November 1927.

2. See I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 7, p. 315 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 322].

3. *XV s’ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol’shevikov)*. vol. II, pp. 1443–1444.

4. N. I. Bukharin, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, M., 1988, p. 391.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 396.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 400.

7. Martem’ian Riutin, *Na koleni ne vstanu* [I Won’t Get on My Knees], M. 1992, p. 15.

8. *Pravda*, 3 October 1928.

9. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, [Information of the CC of the CPSU], 1990, № 2, pp. 121–122.

10. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 235–236 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 245].

11. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1990, № 6, p. 71.

12. Riutin, *Na koleni ne vstanu* [I Won’t Get on My Knees], pp. 281–282.

13. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, p. 321 [*Works*, vol. 11, p. 335].

14. *Istoriia SSSR*, 1990, № 4, p. 12.

15. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 287–288 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 299–300].

16. *Ibid.*, p. 290 [*Ibid.*, p. 302].

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 271–275 [*Ibid.*, pp. 281–285].

[18](#). Ibid., p. 260 [Ibid., p. 270].

[19](#). With regard to this and other attempts by Stalin to attribute all failures of his policy to bearers of “Trotskyist ideology,” Trotsky scathingly wrote: “What happened to Stalin with regard to the market and NEP is what usually happens with empiricists ... Empiricism most often serves as the precondition for subjectivism, and if it is bureaucratic empiricism, then it inevitably becomes the precondition for periodic ‘excesses.’ The art of the ‘general’ leadership consists in this case in changing the excesses into smaller excesses, and then in distributing them equally among helots who are called executors. If, in conclusion, the general excess is added to ‘Trotskyism,’ then the task is finished.” (*Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1930, № 14, p. 29 [*Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, “Stalin as a Theoretician,” p. 317]).

[20](#). I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 277–278 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 288–289].

[21](#). Ibid., p. 278 [Ibid., p. 289].



# 9. Why there was no Bloc between “Rightists” and the Left Opposition

At the Sixteenth Congress, Ordzhonikidze announced that, between the Fifteenth Congress in 1927 and 1 February 1930, the Control Commissions had called to account 7,300 people for Trotskyism.<sup>1</sup> As before, those “called to account” faced a severe alternative: either declare that they had stopped their “factional activity” and had renounced their views; or be expelled from the party, which as a rule would mean that they would lose their work and be passed from the hands of the Control Commission into the hands of the GPU.

By 1928, vacillations had already arisen among some of the oppositionists in connection with Stalin’s loud declarations about the struggle against the kulak and the “right deviation.” Many rank-and-file Trotskyists took Stalin’s demagoguery seriously, that he was the one now defending a genuinely leftist, Leninist line in fighting against the “rightists.” Evidence of this can be seen in particular in a letter from two worker-oppositionists to Trotsky, in which they spoke about the “harmfulness” of the idea that the main danger as before came from the Stalinists, and that the “left” turn was only the next Stalinist adventure. Disoriented by Stalin’s propaganda that had been trumpeting the growth of the “rightist danger,” the letter’s authors wrote that “a division of forces has taken place with a significant shift to the right,” that supposedly the Stalinists at the July and November plenums of the CC had suffered defeat, and “the Rykovists had already placed on the agenda the removal of Stalin from the leadership of the VKP(b) and the rout of the Stalinists.” The letter continued: “If the rightists are working for the counter-revolution, the Stalinists are now working for the revolution, ... Stalin is fighting for industrialization against its enemies, and by doing so he is standing on our side of the barricade.” They drew the conclusion that the Left Opposition should issue a declaration about supporting the Stalin faction as “today’s left wing inside the party.”<sup>2</sup>

Among the leaders of the opposition, such moods were shared mainly by Radek and Preobrazhensky, who claimed that if the opposition maintained its hostile attitude toward Stalin, the latter would assume the place of the left wing in the party. As early as June 1928, Radek wrote to Ter-Vaganian:

“The center, headed by Stalin, has taken the initiative of reform into its own hands. ... It is not excluded that the center will not be in a position to simply capitulate before them (the rightists), and, when faced with the choice: neo-NEP or a struggle, it will be forced to fight and seek our assistance. Then we will return to the party, not in a fight against the center, but with its help. Whether Stalin heads the center at that time, or someone else, does not have decisive significance. ... At a time when a bloc with our rightists is excluded, with the center it is historically possible.”<sup>3</sup>

The most perceptive oppositionists opposed such schematic formulations that abstracted themselves from Stalin’s personality and seemingly advocated, in the name of “broad” political

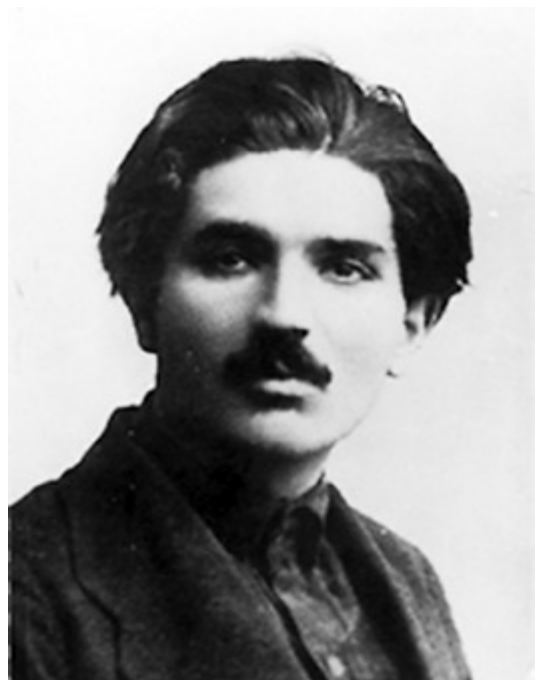
considerations, forgetting about his lack of political principles and his cunning. In replying to Radek about his arguments for a possible bloc with the Stalinists, I. N. Smirnov wrote:

“What kind of a bloc could we have with him ... Here you are mistaken — history does not know of instances when political figures reflecting the interests of the same groups sent each other to prison and into exile ... There is a way back into the party, the way chosen by Zinoviev, Pyatakov and Safarov, but it is a despicable way, for it is based on deceiving the party and the working class. At one time I foresaw this path, and with the approval of those named above said the following: ‘You can save your life at a cost of losing life’s meaning.’”<sup>4</sup>

In letters to his co-thinkers, Trotsky warned that Radek’s proposed bloc of the Left Opposition with the Stalinists would inevitably lead to an unprincipled capitulation of the oppositionists and to their support for Stalin’s adventuristic ultra-left zigzag. In carefully analyzing information about the struggle inside the Politburo — thoroughly hidden by the party leaders, but nevertheless falling into his hands — he stressed that both groups, while not wishing to submit the differences to judgment by the party, were driving the unresolved problems more deeply underground and were maintaining their adherence to the myths about “Trotskyism” they had created, as well as their irreconcilable hostility to the Left Opposition. “It is very probable,” wrote Trotsky to Rakovsky on 14 July 1928, “that Stalin’s bloc with Bukharin-Rykov will still preserve the appearance of unity at this congress (of the Comintern – *V. R.*) in order to make a last hopeless attempt to cover us with the most ‘final’ tombstone slab. But precisely this new effort and its inevitable failure may greatly accelerate the process of differentiation within the bloc, for on the day after the congress, the question will more nakedly arise: What next?” In connection with this, Trotsky considered that a “new phase of ultraleftism” was entirely possible.<sup>5</sup>



*Karl Berngardovich Radek*  
(1885–1939)



*Vagarshak Ter-Vaganian*  
(1893–1936)

While rejecting the illusion that Stalin was capable of conducting a genuinely left, Bolshevik, policy, Trotsky stressed in letters to his comrades that the outer similarity of Stalin’s new slogans to

the slogans of the Left Opposition must not obscure the fact that an impassable chasm remained between the policies of Stalinism and the program of the opposition. In evaluating Stalin's new course, he called upon them to remember that "in politics, it is not only *what*, but *how* and *who* that decide."<sup>6</sup> The falsity of Stalin's course is shown in the fact that it is carried out by the bureaucratic apparatus ("who") and by methods of administrative pressure, crude compulsion and violence against the masses ("how").

As long as Trotsky remained in the USSR and had the opportunity to correspond with his co-thinkers, the majority of them did not allow even the thought of capitulating before Stalin. "Kamenev and Zinoviev have weak nerves and are 'not entirely courageous'; they acted cowardly and 'crawled on their bellies into the party' (Zinoviev's literal words)," Muralov wrote to Trotsky in June 1928. "As you recall, you and I refused such an unattractive, unaesthetic, uncustomary and unhygienic way of entering the revolutionary Bolshevik Party. We felt that Zinoviev's way was insulting to the party, to Lenin and to us. ... To write a declaration of repentance? *I may be dying but I won't write one*; they can draw and quarter me but I won't write one. *I may stand alone, but I won't write one.*"<sup>7</sup>

In describing the political situation in 1928 in his book *Technology of Power*, A. Avtorkhanov writes:

"Despite the rout and exile of their leaders, the Trotskyists continued an irreconcilable struggle against the 'epigones of October' and 'Stalinist reaction.' Their courage, fearlessness and readiness to make personal sacrifices favorably distinguished the Trotskyists from the Zinovievists. In this sense, the Trotskyists as allies (of the "Rightists" – *V. R.*) would have been a real force. But the ideological abyss between the 'leftists' and 'rightists' was a dead zone where neither the doctrinaire-Bukharinists nor the idealist-Trotskyists dared to tread. Few people from both groups raised themselves higher than either doctrine in the sense of understanding historical perspectives."<sup>8</sup>

Here the historian allows an obvious distortion. It is true that, like Stalin, the leaders of the ruling factions who had formed a bloc with Stalin placed the interests of the struggle for power above political principles. However, such behavior was far from characteristic of the Left Opposition, let alone Trotsky, who clearly understood that his struggle against Stalin and Stalinism was a struggle for the principles of Bolshevism being ruthlessly trampled by Stalinist reaction. Trotsky was deeply irreconcilable to unprincipled political combinations, and therefore displayed particular caution in drawing any closer to his recent fundamental opponents.

Avtorkhanov is correct in noting that, in 1928, the disagreements between the Left Opposition and the "rightists" had somewhat softened. This occurred most of all because the Bukharinists, albeit with a lag of several years, drew the same conclusions that the "Trotskyists" had in 1923 about the character of the regime that had been established in the party. Even before he had written his programmatic documents at the beginning of 1929, where he directly accused the Stalin group of spreading bureaucratism, Bukharin wrote articles about how far the bureaucratization of the apparatus had gone, i.e., about the tendency which he and Stalin had stubbornly denied during the entire struggle against "Trotskyism." In his "Notes of an Economist," he had stated that "in the pores of our gigantic apparatus, there have also settled elements of bureaucratic degeneration, with their complete

indifference to the interests of the masses, their everyday existence, their life, their material and cultural interests.”<sup>9</sup>

In the article “Lenin and the Tasks of Science in Socialist Construction,” Bukharin turned his attention to the negative consequences of extreme centralization and the bureaucratization of power: given the enormous concentration of the means of production and finances in the hands of the state, any mistake in managing the economy would emerge on a gigantic social scale, and the absence of scientific guidance of economic processes would result in more severe consequences than those caused by the anarchy of production under capitalism.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Bukharin gave a report entitled “Lenin’s Political Testament” at a memorial meeting devoted to the fifth anniversary of Lenin’s death. The very title of his talk must have provoked Stalin’s displeasure, since he had included the word “testament” that had been banned in the party since it pointed to Lenin’s 1922–1923 “Letter to the Congress.” Although Bukharin limited himself in his report to extensive quotations from Lenin’s last works that had already been published by that time, and to commentaries on these quotations, he directed attention to Lenin’s ideas on party democracy, the fight against bureaucratism, etc., which signified an indirect attack on Stalin. Somewhat later, during the furious slander campaign against Bukharin, this report was declared to be “Bernsteinian.”<sup>11</sup>

There was one more objective foundation for rapprochement between the Bukharinists and the Left Opposition — their mutual concern over Stalin’s attempts to emerge from the crisis by using adventuristic, extreme measures.

The unanimously adopted resolutions at the November 1928 plenum of the CC reflected a compromise between two groups in the Politburo. In questions of industrialization, Stalin’s line of forced tempos was victorious; but in questions of agrarian policy, Bukharin’s line of developing small-commodity individual farms and canceling the extraordinary measures was approved. However, the latter line proved to be under threat immediately after the plenum. The country was on the verge of a new grain crisis. Although the harvest of 1928 surpassed the previous year’s, it once again proved impossible to carry out grain procurement by “normal” means. It became clear that the grain procurement campaign was encountering no fewer difficulties than in the previous year.

At the end of 1928, a significant reduction in the sowing of winter crops was discovered — one of the reactions of the peasantry to the extraordinary measures. Difficulties in supplying the cities with grain were so widespread that it was necessary to introduce “passbooks” (of ration cards) for bread. Soon the ration system spread to all basic agricultural and industrial commodities. The worsening of food supplies provoked protests from workers at meetings and spontaneous gatherings. During a meeting of workers and employees at the Poldolsk Mechanical Factory, which Kalinin attended, many speakers said that life was better under Tsarism. One of the workers declared: “Take back the extreme measures, comrade Kalinin, or you’ll get it in the neck.” Communists who tried to defend the official policy were not allowed to speak.<sup>12</sup>

Plans for government grain procurement went unfulfilled, which led to the reduction of grain exports. This in turn led to cutbacks in the import of manufacturing equipment, which threatened to



undermine production programs.

To secure the supply of cities with grain, Bukharin and Rykov proposed that grain be purchased abroad. But this move would have required the expenditure of significant hard currency reserves that had been designated for the purchase of machinery. The very fact that an agrarian country was in need of importing grain for the first time indicated that the “traditional” NEP was ceasing to work. The Stalin faction responded to the proposals to import grain by demanding a return to extraordinary measures.

Bukharin reacted to the new outburst of disagreements with the only method that he possessed, the printed word. At the end of 1928 and beginning of 1929, he published several articles in *Pravda* in which he entered into an indirect polemic with Stalin. In a report, “The Current Moment and Tasks of the Press,” he stressed that only “madmen” could propose “construction at twice the rate than we are now achieving,” for this would mean condemning the country to a famine in both grain and manufactured goods. He mentioned that “the kulak has picked up the gun in some areas” and made it clear that this had happened because dissatisfaction with party policy had accumulated in all layers of the countryside.<sup>13</sup>

As before, however, Bukharin and his allies did not resolve to appeal to the party masses and engage in open inner-party conflict. They even refrained from taking their official program to the Politburo out of fear of falling victim to the “factional” label which they and Stalin had jointly invented in preceding years. At a time when the Trotskyists had maintained their faction, even while making the transition to underground methods of struggle, the Bukharin troika showed indecision in organizationally uniting their co-thinkers. Their political imagination went no further than attempts to create leadership blocs and a struggle to change the composition of the Politburo through behind-the-scenes combinations.

The impossibility of an alliance between the Trotskyists and Rightists was also determined by the doctrinaire adherence of the latter to the myths that they had created about “Trotskyism.” Since they considered these myths to be the most effective ideological weapon, they used them in order to criticize Stalin’s new course. It was precisely due to the efforts of the Bukharin group that a new myth was born in 1928–1929, one that lives on to this day. This new myth claimed that Stalin had armed himself with “Trotskyist ideas” while carrying out his ultra-left policy.

As far as they were concerned, the Trotskyists remembered well the Bukharinists’ lack of political principles when they served in 1926–1927 as the most energetic ideological force in the fight against the Left Opposition and supported the filthiest provocations that Stalin resorted to in the course of this struggle. Even Avtorkhanov, who can in no way be suspected of sympathy for “Trotskyism,” admits:

“When ... Stalin, in his struggle against the ‘Left Opposition’ (Trotsky) and the ‘New Opposition’ (Zinoviev), used methods of obvious falsification and conscious provocation, the Bukharinists only delighted in the high level of Stalin’s creativity. Aided by the silent complicity of the Bukharinists, he resorted to the most masterful numbers from the Dreyfusian political repertoire in attacking Trotsky, the organizer of the October Revolution, and in persecuting the Trotskyists. He did so on a scale and in forms that Lenin never applied even with regard to his political enemies. And he got away with this without a murmur of protest from the Bukharinists.”<sup>14</sup>



In 1923–1926, Trotsky turned to Bukharin more often than any other leader of the ruling faction, trying to appeal to his political honesty and decency. Trotsky, of course, understood that Bukharin stood immeasurably higher than Stalin when it came to his level of education and theoretical culture. However, a series of “anti-Trotskyist” statements by Bukharin, in which theoretical conscientiousness was sacrificed to political intrigue, made Trotsky become increasingly disillusioned with Bukharin, whom he ever more frequently called “Kolya Balabolkin.” On his part, Bukharin continued secret contacts with capitulators among the former leaders of the Left Opposition. But neither politically nor psychologically was he prepared to restore contact with Trotsky, whom he never stopped publicly “exposing.”

Just as politically inept was the behavior of Zinoviev and Kamenev, who, after the July 1928 conversation with Bukharin, apparently hoped for some time that Stalin would call upon them to occupy leading posts. However, soon it became clear that rumors about this move, spread by Stalin, were calculated exclusively to frighten the Bukharinists. The leaders of the “New Opposition” who had capitulated received very modest appointments: Kamenev was named chairman of the Main Concessions Committee, and Zinoviev was made rector of Kazan University. Later, they continued to meet with members of the Politburo from the Stalin group, exploring the question of their transfer to higher positions (Kamenev, for instance, wanted to return to the leadership of the Lenin Institute). Members of the Politburo not only did not refuse these meetings, but even shared their political doubts with yesterday’s opponents. Thus, Kalinin, who had come to see Zinoviev to tell him about Trotsky’s impending exile, declared in passing: “He (Stalin) chatters about left-wing matters, but very soon he will be forced to carry out my (i.e., “rightist” – *V.R.*) policy three times over — that is why I support him.”<sup>15</sup>

Knowing about the political discord and vacillation within the Stalin group, the Bukharinists, as well as the “leaders” of the Left Opposition who had capitulated, evidently hoped that the possibility remained of “outplaying” Stalin in future high-level intrigues. Right up until the beginning of 1929, intensive contacts continued between the Stalinists, Bukharinists, and Zinovievists, who were probing and exploring each other’s inclinations. These contacts were within the purview of the “Trotskyists.”

In the fall of 1928, Trotsky received a letter from Moscow telling of a conversation between two of his supporters and Kamenev. In the course of this discussion, Kamenev declared that “it is lamentable that a break occurred (between the Trotskyists and the “New Opposition” – *V. R.*) and that life had confirmed all the positions of the (Left – *V. R.*) Opposition. The diagnosis made by the Opposition, was absolutely correct.” Kamenev gave a rather realistic analysis of the results of Stalin’s “new turn.” Its main result, he felt, was the paradoxical situation: after four good harvests, the country was suffering through a sharp economic crisis. The results of the grain procurements clearly indicated that the crisis could not be overcome with extraordinary measures. These measures, “carried out stupidly, had grabbed a significant part of the middle peasants in the village and even the poor peasants.” After the winter campaign with its extraordinary measures, the village poor, who had not received the aid promised by the Soviet regime, ended up in the spring without enough grain

needed even for sowing. Therefore the poor peasants once again fell into dependence on the kulak, “with one difference: now the kulak was making them pay two, three, or five times more than before.” Nevertheless, the poor peasant, who had at least received some kind of aid from the kulak at a difficult moment, would not support a new application of extraordinary measures. If Stalin decided to resort once again to such measures, “the peasant population might turn to unwanted methods of fighting for grain.” “The leaders have led the country to such a state,” Kamenev noted in summary, “that there are no measures of an economic order that are capable of leading the country out of the crisis, using its own resources.”<sup>16</sup>



*Georgii [Yurii] Leonidovich Pyatakov (1890–1937)*

At the end of 1928, Kamenev and Bukharin visited Pyatakov, who was in a hospital. At this meeting, Bukharin read aloud his platform, after which he never did so again. Pyatakov told this to the CC, and as a result, at a session of the Politburo, Bukharin had to justify his continuing “factional” contacts with “Trotskyists.”

A letter, “Inside the Right-Centrist Bloc,” sent to the *Bulletin of the Opposition*, said that during this discussion Bukharin had told about disagreements in the Politburo. He also disclosed that he himself had written one of the resolutions about the struggle against the “Right deviation,” in order to prove that he did not belong to the “Rightists.” The further course of the conversation was retold in the letter with bitterly sarcastic comment.

“Pyatakov butted in on the conversation, declaring: ‘My strong advice is not to act against Stalin, who is followed by the majority (the majority of bureaucrats like Pyatakov, or even worse?). Past experience teaches us that such an action ends poorly’ (an argument remarkable for its cynicism!). Bukharin responded: ‘This is, of course true, but what then must we do?’ (poor Bukharin!). After Bukharin had left, Kamenev asked Pyatakov: ‘Why is he giving such advice, he’s only hindering the

unleashing of the battle.’ Pyatakov said that he was absolutely serious when he felt that one couldn’t act against Stalin. ‘Stalin is the only person whom we can still obey (pearls, truly pearls: the question is not which way is correct, but whom to “obey” so that there would be no “bad” consequences). Bukharin and Rykov are making a mistake when they assume that they will rule instead of Stalin. The Kaganoviches will rule, and I neither want to, nor will not, obey the Kaganoviches’ (not true: he will obey even Kaganovich) ... Zinoviev and Kamenev characterized the situation at the end of December as such: ‘We must seize the helm. This can be done only after supporting Stalin; therefore we must not stop in order to pay him the full price’ (poor fellows: how much they have already paid, and they are still very far from the helm).”<sup>17</sup>

Of course, both Bukharin and the capitulators from the former leaders of the Left Opposition understood that the periodically recurring campaigns of extraordinary measures would intensify the discontent of the peasantry and sharpen the political and economic crisis. The very conception of “extraordinary measures” suggested that they were temporary, and that “tomorrow everything will fall back into the old rut. But the peasants did not believe these fine words, and they were right. The violent seizures of grain deprived the well-off peasants of their motive to increase sowings. The hired hands and the poor peasant found themselves without work. Agriculture again arrived in a blind alley, and with it the state. It was necessary at any cost to reform the ‘general line.’”<sup>18</sup> Such a reform would necessarily have required acknowledgment of mistakes made, the cessation of persecuting the Left Opposition, and the restoration of party and soviet democracy. However, neither the Stalin nor the Bukharin group was capable of such steps. The Bukharinists had lost the qualities of honest and principled politicians in the period of their bloc with Stalin.



*“Illustrated Russia,” an emigré newspaper published in Paris, covering Trotsky’s “last days in Moscow,” his exile to Alma-Ata and the exile of other Trotskyists to Siberia, 28 January 1928.*

Now, having gone over to opposing Stalin, they could not renounce the bogeymen of “factionalism” and “Trotskyism” which Stalin was preparing to use against them. An even sharper dividing line between the Trotskyists and Bukharinists was created by the latter’s agreement with the decision to send Trotsky into exile abroad.

1. XVI s’ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol’shevikov). *Stenograficheskii otchet*, M., 1930, p. 323.

2. *Minuvshie. Istoricheskii al’makh.* 7 [The Past. Historical Almanac. 7], M., 1992, pp. 310–311.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 290–291.

- [4.](#) Ibid., p. 301.
- [5.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Moia zhizn'*, pp. 526–527 [Leon Trotsky, *My Life*, 1970, pp. 554–555].
- [6.](#) Ibid., p. 524 [Ibid., p. 552].
- [7.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1929, № 6, pp. 32–33.
- [8.](#) A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiya vlasti*, p. 111.
- [9.](#) N. I. Bukharin, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* [Selected Works], p. 417 [Bukharin, *Selected Writings on the State and the Transition to Socialism*, pp. 328–329].
- [10.](#) *Pravda*, 20 January 1929.
- [11.](#) *Pravda*, 24 August 1929.
- [12.](#) *Znamia*, 1990, № 3, p. 151.
- [13.](#) N. I. Bukharin, *Put' k sotsializmu* [The Path to Socialism], Novosibirsk, 1990, pp. 377–379.
- [14.](#) A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiya vlasti*, p. 134.
- [15.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1929, № 1–2, p. 16.
- [16.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1991, № 2–3, pp. 201–203.
- [17.](#) G. G., “Inside the Right-Centrist Bloc (A Letter from Moscow),” *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1929, № 1–2, p. 16.
- [18.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Predannaia revoliutsiia*, p. 34 [Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p. 32].



# 10. Trotsky's Deportation

In order to completely isolate Trotsky from his co-thinkers, starting in October 1928, the GPU suddenly cut off all his correspondence with his supporters, friends and relatives. Even the letter from a Moscow hospital sent by his hopelessly ill daughter, Nina, who had been expelled from the party, was received by Trotsky seventy-three days after it was sent, and his response did not find her among the living.

On 26 November, the Politburo discussed the question “On Trotsky’s counter-revolutionary activity,” and instructed the OGPU to deliver an ultimatum to Trotsky that he cease all political activity. Volynsky, a plenipotentiary of the secret-political department of the OGPU, was sent to Alma-Ata for this purpose. He read Trotsky a memorandum which announced that the OGPU possessed information about his activity “assuming ever more the character of outright counter-revolution,” and of organizing a “second party.” Therefore, if Trotsky were to deny his leadership of the “so-called opposition,” the OGPU “would be forced” to change the conditions of his custody in order to maximally isolate him from political life.<sup>1</sup>

Trotsky replied to this ultimatum with a letter to the Central Committee of the VKP(b) and the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, in which he said in particular:



*Nina Lvovna Nevelson (Sokolovskaya), Trotsky's daughter, who died from tuberculosis on 9 June 1928.*

“Theoretical reason and political experience show that a period of historical rollback, recoil, i.e., reaction can begin not only after a bourgeois, but even after a proletarian revolution. For six years we have been living in the USSR under conditions of a growing reaction against October, and, thereby, of clearing the way for Thermidor. The most obvious and finished expression of this reaction within the party is the savage persecution and organizational rout of the left wing...

“The threat to change the conditions of my existence and isolate me from political activity sounds ... as if the Stalin faction, whose direct organ is the GPU, had not done everything it could to isolate me not only from political, but from any other life. ... Thousands of irreproachable Bolshevik-Leninists, whose services to the October Revolution and the international proletariat immeasurably surpass the services of those who have imprisoned and banished them, are in the same situation, or worse. ... Violence, beatings, torture — both physical and moral — are applied to the best worker-Bolsheviks for their faithfulness to the legacy of October. Such are the general conditions which, according to the words of the collegium of the GPU, now ‘do not impede’ the political activity of the opposition,

and of mine in particular.

“The sorry threat to change these conditions for me in the direction of further isolation means nothing other than the decision of the Stalin faction to replace exile with prison. This decision, as I said above, is nothing new for me. Noted in trends even in



1924, it is being brought to life gradually, through a series of steps, in order to quietly accustom the oppressed and deceived party to Stalin's methods, in which vulgar disloyalty has now ripened into poisoned bureaucratic dishonesty.”<sup>2</sup>

The reaction to this letter was a decree from the Politburo to send Trotsky into exile abroad. In justifying this decision, Stalin declared that it was necessary in order to discredit Trotsky in the eyes of the Soviet people and the foreign workers' movement: if Trotsky continues to engage abroad in further exposés of the party leadership, “then we will portray him as a traitor.”<sup>3</sup> The resolution was passed by a majority of votes. Only Rykov and Voroshilov voted for a more severe measure — to imprison Trotsky.

On 7 January 1929, the Politburo decree was sent to the chairman of the OGPU, Menzhinsky. On 18 January a resolution about deportation was formulated by the Special Board of the collegium of the OGPU [OSO]. Two days later, Volynsky presented Trotsky with the OSO decree, which stated:

*Heard:* the Case of citizen Trotsky, Lev Davydovich, according to article 58/10 of the Criminal Code, on a charge of counter-revolutionary activity expressed in the organization of an illegal anti-Soviet party, whose activity has recently been directed at provoking anti-Soviet actions and to the preparation of armed struggle against the Soviet regime. *Resolved:* To deport citizen Trotsky, Lev Davydovich beyond the borders of the USSR.

Thus, Trotsky's deportation was an act of extra-judicial punishment on trumped up charges, which the accused was not given the right to answer. After Volynsky had proposed that Trotsky sign a receipt showing that he had been shown this document, Trotsky wrote: “Criminal in essence and illegal in form, the decree of the GPU has been announced to me.”<sup>4</sup>

In his official report about completing his assignment, Volynsky stated that Trotsky said to him:

“The GPU confronted a dilemma — either put me in prison or send me abroad. The first, of course, is less convenient, since it will cause commotion and inevitable disturbances and agitation among the workers to set me free. Therefore, Stalin has decided to send me abroad. I could, of course, refuse, because from the standpoint of the domestic situation it would be better for me to be in prison. If I reasoned like Stalin, who never understood what revolutionary emigration means, I would refuse to go. For Stalin, ‘emigrant’ is a swear-word, and to end up in emigration means for him a political death ... With his limited mind, he is in no position to understand that for a Leninist it is the same to work in any section of the working class.”<sup>5</sup>

On the basis of a directive received from Yagoda, immediately after presenting the decree of the OSO, Volynsky announced that Trotsky and his family were under house arrest, and gave them forty-eight hours to pack their things for travel. After this they were loaded under guard by specially chosen GPU troops onto a train car whose route was not told to them.

In order to avoid protest demonstrations as Trotsky was being deported, like that which accompanied his exile a year earlier to Alma-Ata, the deportation proceeded under conditions of the strictest secrecy. The Zinoviev group, however, was informed about it; Stalin expected that they would approve this action. When the Zinovievists gathered to discuss this news, Bakaev proposed to hold a protest against the deportation. Zinoviev replied that “there was no one to protest before,” since “the boss was not present.” On the next day, Zinoviev visited Krupskaya, who told him that she, too, had heard about the deportation being prepared. “What do you intend to do with him?” Zinoviev asked her, having in mind that Krupskaya was a member of the Presidium of the CCC. “First of all, not *you*, but *they*,” Krupskaya answered. “And second, even if we decided to protest, who would listen to us?”<sup>6</sup>

Only after a few days of travel was Trotsky told that Constantinople had been designated as the place of his exile. During those days, the Soviet government had turned to many governments with a request to accept Trotsky, but only Turkey gave a positive answer after long negotiations. Not knowing about this, Trotsky refused to go to Turkey voluntarily and demanded that he be sent to Germany. For twelve days the train stood at a remote semi-station in the Kursk region until the new OGPU representative, Bulanov, who replaced Volynsky, told them that the German government had categorically refused to allow Trotsky to enter their country, and that a final command had been received to take him to Constantinople. In Bulanov's official reports telling about his conversations with Trotsky on the train, he recalled the extremely sharp tone and expressions with which Trotsky referred "to the big boss."

Along the way, the escort was continuously enlarged, and Trotsky was forbidden to leave the train, which stopped only at small stations in order to take on water and fuel. Meanwhile, the OGPU agent, Fokin, who had been sent to Odessa to organize Trotsky's secret boarding of the steamship, told his superiors that he had done everything to not allow a possible demonstration in the city. The crew of the steamship "Ilyich" was carefully checked and "unreliables" were removed from the vessel; a reserve crew was prepared that would be "able to run the ship even if the rest of the crew completely refused to do so."<sup>7</sup>

The train-car that arrived in Odessa was taken straight to the ship's berth. Despite the dead of night, the wharf was cordoned off by troops from the GPU. On 12 February 1929, the "Ilyich" entered bordering waters, where Trotsky gave a declaration to a Turkish officer to be transmitted to the President of the Turkish republic, Kemal Pasha:

"My Dear Sir. At the gates of Constantinople, I have the honor of informing you that I have arrived at the Turkish border not of my own choice and that I can cross this border only by submitting to force."<sup>8</sup>

Only a week later did *Pravda* place a short notice: "For anti-Soviet activity, L. D. Trotsky has been exiled beyond the borders of the USSR by decree of the Special Board of the OGPU. In accordance with his wishes, his family left together with him."<sup>9</sup> This announcement did not include the charges contained in the decree of the OSO that Trotsky was preparing armed struggle against the Soviet regime. In one of the first articles published in exile, Trotsky wrote:

"Why did Stalin not dare to repeat in *Pravda* what is said in the decree of the GPU? Because he knew that no one would believe him. ... But why then in this instance did he insert this obvious lie in the decree of the GPU? Not for the USSR, but for Europe and the whole world. Stalin could not explain the exile and countless arrests other than by pointing to the preparation by the opposition of armed struggle. With this monstrous lie he has dealt the greatest harm to the Soviet Republic. All the bourgeois press has been saying that Trotsky, Rakovsky, Smilga, Radek, I. N. Smirnov, Beloborodov, Muralov, Mrachkovsky and many others, who built the republic and defended it, are now preparing an armed struggle against Soviet power. It is clear to what degree such an idea must weaken the Soviet Republic in the eyes of the entire world!"<sup>10</sup>

Trotsky warned that after his exile one must expect new provocations by Stalin against the opposition.

"A naked declaration that the opposition is a 'counter-revolutionary party' is insufficient: no one will take this seriously. The more they expel and exile the oppositionists, the more of them will arise within the party. At the November plenum of the CC of the VKP(b) (1928), even Stalin admitted this. For him, one thing remains: to try to draw a line of blood between the official

party and the opposition. He urgently needs to link the opposition to attacks, to the preparation of an armed uprising and so forth ... Hence Stalin's plan: to present charges of 'preparing armed struggle' as the precondition of a new round of repression ... Matters of this kind — and only this kind — Stalin thinks through to the end ... The impotent policy of maneuvering and equivocating, the growing economic difficulties, and the growth of distrust in the party against the leadership have led Stalin to the necessity of stunning the party by dramatization on a grand scale. He needs a blow, he needs a shock, he needs a catastrophe.”<sup>[11](#)</sup>



*Prison photos of Yakov Blumkin, 1929.*

Having precisely identified Stalin's strategic plan, Trotsky underestimated this time, too, the tactical mastery of the “brilliant administrator of doses” in matters “of this kind.” At the end of the 1920s, Stalin had made only probing attempts to accuse Trotsky of activity directed at overthrowing Soviet power. The first such attempt was the arrest in 1928 of Butov, Trotsky's close collaborator, and the extortion from him of testimony about Trotsky's “counter-revolutionary preparations.” Butov responded with a hunger strike in prison which lasted fifty days and ended in his death.

The first bloody reprisal against an oppositionist was the shooting in 1929 of Trotsky's former collaborator, Yakov Blumkin, who had become a Soviet intelligence agent. He was executed for meeting in Turkey with Trotsky and for taking a letter from him to Radek (the latter, without opening the letter, immediately handed it over to the OGPU). In responding to this event, Trotsky wrote:

“With Blumkin's execution, Stalin wants to show the international opposition of Bolshevik-Leninists that, within the country, he has hundreds and thousands of hostages who will pay with their heads for the successes of genuine Bolshevism on the world arena.”<sup>[12](#)</sup>

However, the shooting of Blumkin proved to be not only the first, but also the last instance of the physical destruction of an oppositionist right up until 1934. Stalin delayed a final blow against the Left Opposition for several years, in order to then direct it on a scale never before seen in history. For the time being, he felt that it was “sufficient” to intensify the repressions against unbroken oppositionists.

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<sup>1</sup>. See: L. D. Trotskii, *Moia zhizn'*, p. 530 [Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 558].

- [2.](#) Ibid., pp. 532–534 [Ibid., pp. 559–561].
- [3.](#) *Biulleten 'oppozitsii*, 1929, № 1–2, p. 3.
- [4.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Moia zhizn'*, p. 535 [Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 562].
- [5.](#) *Vechernii klub*, 1992, № 1.
- [6.](#) *Biulleten 'oppozitsii*, 1929, № 1–2, pp. 16–17.
- [7.](#) *Vechernii klub*, 1992, № 1.
- [8.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Moia zhizn'*, p. 538 [Trotsky, *My Life*, p. 565–566].
- [9.](#) *Pravda*, 19 February 1929.
- [10.](#) *Biulleten 'oppozitsii*, 1929, № 1–2, p. 3.
- [11.](#) Ibid.
- [12.](#) *Biulleten 'oppozitsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 8.

# Выписка из протокола №

Заседания Коллегии ОГПУ (судебное) от 3 ноября 1929 г.

СЛУШАЛИ	ПОСТАНОВИЛИ
<p>следственного дела № 99762 по обв. гр. БЛУМКИНА Якова Герше- вича, 1896 г/рожд, ур. Черни- говской губ. ранее осуждавшего- ся за контрреволюционную дея- тельность, по обвинению в со- вершении преступления, предус- мотренных ст.ст. 58.1, 58.10 Уг. Кодекса РСФСР.</p> <p>Дело слушается во внесудебном порядке в сост. о Пост. През. ВЦИК от 5/У-1927 года.</p>	<p>Б Л У М К И Н А Якова Гер- шевича - за контрреволюционную деятельность, повторную измену делу пролетарской революции и советской власти, за измену рев. чеккистской армии и шпио- наж в пользу германской военной разведки -</p> <p><u>РАССТРЕЛЯТЬ</u> с конфискацией всего имущества</p>

*Менжинский*  
/Игода/  
/Трилиссер/  
Секретарь Коллегии ОГПУ  
*Ягода*  
*Трилиссер*

Transcript of the OGPU Collegium session on 3 November  
1929, ordering Blumkin's execution.  
Signed by Menzhinsky, Yagoda and Trilisser.



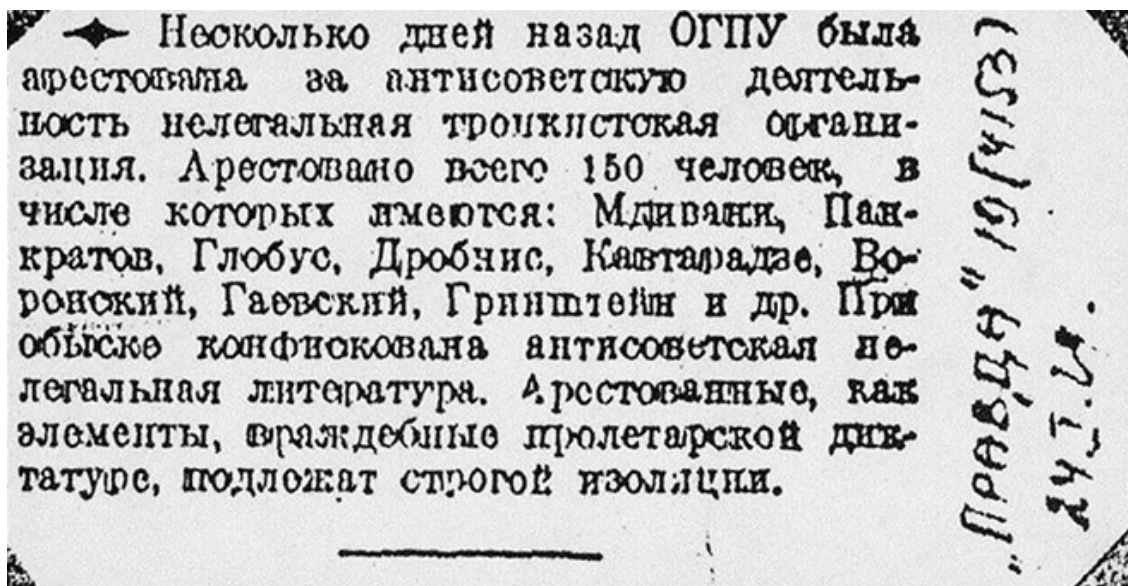
# 11. Stalin against the “Trotskyists.”

## The “Trotskyists” against Stalin.

Simultaneously with the decision to deport Trotsky, the decision was made to conduct mass arrests of oppositionists throughout the country, including those located in exile. Under the rubric of “Chronicle,” the central newspapers published an announcement: “A few days ago the OGPU arrested an illegal Trotskyist organization for anti-Soviet activity. One hundred fifty people were arrested in all. ... During searches, illegal anti-Soviet literature was confiscated. As elements hostile to the proletarian dictatorship, those arrested are subject to strict isolation.”<sup>1</sup> This meant that prison, not exile, had been chosen henceforth as the “measure of restraint” for “Trotskyists who had not disarmed.”

On the same day, Stalin published an unsigned lead article in *Pravda* entitled “They Have Sunk to the Depths.” The article was published under his name only in 1949, in volume eleven of his collected works, with the note “Published for the first time.” In it, Stalin stressed that:

“in the course of 1928, the Trotskyists have completed their transformation from an underground anti-party group to an underground anti-Soviet organization. Herein lies *what is new* that forced the organs of Soviet power in the course of 1928 to take repressive measures against members of this underground organization ... The *subversive* work of the Trotskyist organization demands on the part of the organs of Soviet power a merciless struggle against this anti-Soviet organization.”



Among 150 arrested members of “illegal Trotskyist organization”: Mdivani, Pankratov, Globus, Drobni, Kavtaradze, Voronsky, Gaevsky, and Grinshtein.

The article contained unequivocal threats against the Trotskyists, who “are at a crossroads,” and also a demand that all members of the party “understand and assimilate [that] between the former Trotskyist opposition within the VKP(b) and today’s anti-Soviet Trotskyist underground organization outside the VKP(b) *there is already an impassable chasm*. ... Therefore we must absolutely not

allow that ‘liberal’ attitude toward members of the underground Trotskyist organization which is shown at times by individual members of the party.”<sup>2</sup>

This was Stalin’s first step directed at charging the “Trotskyists” with “subversive” anti-Soviet activity in order to narrow the sphere of the official polemic with “Trotskyism” as an ideological tendency.

After the appearance of this article, “mass meetings” were inspired with denunciations of “brazen Trotskyists,” approval of the repressive measures taken against them, and demands to immediately deport from the territory of the Soviet Union leaders of the opposition who “had not laid down their arms.” However, the deportation abroad of a large group of oppositionists did not enter into Stalin’s plans, since he assumed that the exile of Trotsky would force the remaining leaders of the opposition to capitulate. A new wave of arrests unleashed in the spring of 1929 was intended to contribute to this. Sergei M. Golitsyn, who was a prisoner at that time in Butyrki Prison, recalled:

“Bolshevik-oppositionists ... began to be arrested and imprisoned in Lubyanka; if they were at Butyrki, then they were in separate cells. We saw them let out for exercise; they would walk in a circle, one after the other at a distance of two meters, like in the painting by Van Gogh. For several days we read a sign written in ink in the bathroom that read: ‘Leninists! They have begun to sentence us to concentration camps. Be stronger!’”<sup>3</sup>

An expressive depiction of the conduct of oppositionists who were the first to end up in Soviet prisons is contained in Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s novel *In the First Circle*. This portrayal is based on the memoirs of Lev Kopelev (appearing in the novel under the name of Lev Rubin) who described the ordeals that he faced in 1929 for helping his older brother, a Trotskyist, in hiding the type for an underground print shop. In the novel Rubin recalls how he was thrown into the Kharkov inner prison of the GPU which was completely filled with oppositionists.

“Every sound reverberated loudly throughout the prison. Lyovka heard them dragging someone with a crash down the stairs, and suddenly a heart-rending howl shook the prison:

‘Comrades! Greetings from the cold punishment cell! Down with the Stalinist executioners!’

They were beating him (one could hear the peculiar sound of blows against soft flesh!), they held his mouth shut, the howling became intermittent and died out — but three hundred prisoners in three hundred solitary cells pounded on the doors to their cells and shouted in despair:

‘Down with the bloody dogs!’ ... ‘You want the blood of workers?’

‘Again a tsar is on our backs?’ ... ‘Long live Leninism! ...’

And suddenly in some of the cells, frantic voices began to sing:

‘Arise, ye prisoners of starvation...’

And the whole invisible mass of prisoners rang out to the point of self-oblivion: ‘This is our final and decisive battle!...’

It couldn’t be seen, but many of those singing, including Lyovka, must have had tears of joy in their eyes.

The prison hummed like an angry beehive. A cluster of prison-guards with keys in their hands hid on the staircase in horror before the immortal proletarian hymn...”<sup>4</sup>

The oppositionists who remained at liberty conducted themselves with no less courage; they responded to the toughening of repression against their comrades by stepping up their illegal activity. Two days after the decision was made by the OGPU to deport Trotsky, Moscow oppositionists launched a “bombshell” against the Politburo that had dictated this decision — a proclamation

entitled: “To Party Conferences. They are Leading the Party with its Eyes Bound toward a New Catastrophe.” This leaflet contained an account of the conversation between Bukharin and Kamenev, with a preface written by Aleksandr Voronsky.<sup>5</sup> The record of the conversation even made its way abroad, and in March 1929 was published in extracts in the German newspaper *Volkswille*, which was close to the opposition. Soon the text was published in a reverse translation in the emigré Menshevik paper, *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* [Socialist Herald], and two weeks later, in the French communist opposition newspaper *Contre le Courant*. On 4 May, the *Socialist Herald* gave a description of the leaflet which had appeared in the USSR, and published fragments from it that were missing in the German publication.



*Aleksandr Voronsky's  
arrest photo, 1929*

In April 1929, another opposition leaflet distributed in Moscow and the Moscow region announced that “a wave of arrests that descended on Moscow from 26 to 30 March, ... has torn from our ranks another 200 active comrades.” These arrests were seen to be the revenge of the Stalinists against those who had been warning about the inevitable bankruptcy of their policies. The leaflet recalled that not long before, the party higher-ups had asserted

“that there are no dangers, the class enemy has nowhere to go, and so forth. The opposition is shattered, exiled, and routed. And suddenly ... some kulak doesn’t want to give up his grain; some members of the party don’t want to see the kulak, and don’t want to quarrel with him; some rightists (where did they come from given the monolithic unity of the ‘Leninist’ CC and the ‘Leninist’ party?) demand concessions to capitalist elements, and are undermining plans; prices for bread have to be raised and so forth. How little this resembles the boasting yet debatable declarations of the majority. To anyone who has seriously considered the days gone by of our party, it has become clear that there is an enormous chasm between the words of the Stalinists and their deeds and capabilities, and that the leadership must be replaced. ... Discontent is growing. The masses are beginning to talk about changing the leadership. Rural weavers, Kiev munition workers, and Dnepropetrovsk metal-workers declare that the party is distant from the masses.”<sup>6</sup>

In response, the ruling faction was doing everything to deprive the workers of its genuinely revolutionary vanguard by means of ever broader and more ferocious repressions.

Other leaflets that were signed anonymously (“a group of Bolshevik-Leninists,” “a group of worker-Bolsheviks,” and so forth) gave the names of workers arrested at various factories; they told of the fatal hunger-strike called by a group of oppositionists in the Tobolsk prison, and of other forms of resistance to their jailers. One of the leaflets said:

“Isn’t it shameful that, instead of strengthening the position of the proletariat — the bearer of power in our country — the bureaucratic leadership is weakening it in every way; encouraging passivity; putting pressure on the workers; filling up the working day; reducing wages; persecuting, arresting and exiling exemplary workers?”<sup>7</sup>

The demands of the opposition won support at workers' meetings at a number of factories in Moscow and the Moscow region. The character of these demands can be seen in the "Additions of Bolshevik-Leninists (Opposition) to the Mandate of the Moscow Soviet": restore the publication, suspended in September 1927, of figures on the movement of real wages; reduce expenditures on the apparatus by no less than 25 percent; sharply reduce the apparatus, and lower the pay-rates of highly-paid categories; completely shut down the sale of vodka at all workers' centers; in order to halt inflation, demand the complete cessation of the printing of paper currency.<sup>8</sup>

The behavior of Trotskyists both at liberty and in prison and exile showed that, despite the growing pressure of police persecution, they remained the political force that was the most dangerous for Stalin. Meanwhile, the deportation of Trotsky and mass arrests of oppositionists freed Stalin's hands for a more decisive offensive against the "rightists," who had surrendered one position after another to him.

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- <sup>1</sup>. *Pravda*, 24 January 1929 [See photo on next page].
  - <sup>2</sup>. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 313–317 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 327–331]. *Pravda*, 24 January 1929.
  - <sup>3</sup>. Sergei M. Golitsyn, "Notes of A Survivor," *Druzhba narodov*, 1990, № 3, p. 119.
  - <sup>4</sup>. *Novyi mir*, 1990, № 4, p. 89.
  - <sup>5</sup>. Voronsky's own moods during this period can be seen by the epigraph from Lermontov he placed at the beginning of his memoirs about the Bolshevik underground, written in 1928: "And the marshals heed not the call: some have died in battle, others have betrayed him and sold their swords" (*Novyi mir*; 1928, № 9, p. 154).
  - <sup>6</sup>. *Istoriia SSSR*, 1991, № 5, p. 111.
  - <sup>7</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
  - <sup>8</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 113–114.

Полтора месяца тому назад я просил  
курить и обещаю больше не курить  
— М. Бухарин

18 апр 1928г

Москва

**ПЕРВЫЙ ШКОЛЬНЫЙ ОТРЯД  
„ДОЛОЙ КУРЕНЬЕ“**

Летовая тетрадка. На ней  
аккуратной детской рукой  
написаны следующие строки:

„Не отравляйте воздух,  
которым мы дышим“.

„Мы боремся за свежий  
воздух — основу здоровья“.

„Мы, новояз есени, запре-  
щаем курить в школе и дома“.

„Не подавайте нам дурного  
примера курением“.

„Курящий — вор кисто-  
рода и друг туберкулеза“.

Вот отряд — 28 человек.  
21 девочка и 7 мальчиков.

Приводим ряд страниц, по-  
своенным „отчетам“.

„9 апреля 1928 г. Работа  
в Москве. Работало 7 че-  
ловек. Разделись по кварти-  
рам. Один заметил, что на 5-м  
этаже нет объявления о за-  
прещении курить. Завыл об  
этом. Просьбу выложили. На  
3-м этаже работником Мос-  
дроза было оказано упорное  
сопротивление, и пришлось  
всем поочередно посетить его.  
Часто приходилось напоми-  
нать машинисткам. Работа  
прошла весело, с большим  
интересом. Со стороны взрос-  
лых полное подчинение не  
просьбам“.

„10 апреля 1928 г. Работа  
в Москве. Произошло очень  
длительное объяснение с сотруд-  
ником 9 квартиры 5 этажа, ко-  
торый указывал на свой воз-  
раст (60 лет) и долгий стаж  
(40 лет) курения и заявил о  
послушании детей взрослым.  
Мною отмечено: „Приходит-  
ся вам, маленьким, учить  
взрослых, а если не можете  
сами бросить курить, идите  
лечиться. А то ведь не трудно  
войти и в уборную и там  
покурить“.

„Постоянные напоминания  
машинисткам, ухитрившимся  
прятать папиросы в рукава.  
Но все же при настоящих  
напоминаниях недовольные  
бросали. Работа прошла  
оказанно“.

„12 апреля, Москва. Работали с 10 до  
1 часу. Часто приходилось напоми-  
нать машинисткам, прятаным папиросам за уши.  
Одна сотрудница не пожелала выйти из  
рабочей комнаты. После долгих просьб была  
заставлена. Завалили вопросом о мандатах.“

Из „протоколов“ собраний этих детей мы  
узнаем, что они обсуждают эти обследо-  
вания, что они постановляют не пить и не



Н. И. Бухарин в клубе им. Кузнецова подписывает свое обещание школам 26-й трудовой школы Бауманского района в Москве. Фот. А. Шайкета.

курить, что они поручают вести борьбу и  
дома и в школе, что они сами пишут пла-  
каты для дома и школы: „Каждый должен  
быть дисциплинирован и вежлив“, „По-  
становлено следить за товарищами, которые  
пьют, так как большой вред приносит вино“.  
Не выдерживающие нехоти, плохо дисци-  
plinированные исключаются из кружка —  
есть и такие!

Эти дети пришли на собрание учредите-  
лей Общества борьбы с алкоголизмом, при-  
ветствовали старших и просили их бросить  
курить и пить. Потом окружили т. Буха-  
рина и заставили его написать свое обе-  
щание в их злобную тетрадку.

Хороший молодец подрастает. „Прихо-  
дится взрослым учиться у маленьких“.  
Бор. Волки.

*Nikolai Bukharin signs a pledge to a Komsomol group: “One  
and a half months ago, I quit smoking, and I promise that I will  
smoke no more.*

*N. Bukharin, 18 April 1928, Moscow.”*



## Партию с заязанными глазами ведут к новой катастрофе

Кампания против правых построена на фальши, на лжи, на дипломатических увертках. Партия и на этот раз будет с запертыми глазами, не говоря о том, что хотят вести ее. И своей речи на пленуме ЦК и ЦКК 19 октября Сталин заявил:

«Ну, а как в Политбюро? Есть ли в Политбюро какое-либо уклонение? В Политбюро нет у нас ни правых, ни левых, ни примиренцев с ними. Это надо здесь сказать со всей категоричностью. Пора бросить слухи, разглагольствовать не обременять партию и венского рода оппозиционерами о наличии правого уклона или примиренческого уклона к нему в Политбюро, о нашем ЦК».

Несмотря на всю категоричность этого утверждения, что фальшь и лже должно сначало до конца. Если наплыв массы остается в-вередности, то всякий, кто знает, знает, что кампания против правых затянута и проводится, как подготовка к кампании против трех членов Политбюро: Рыкова, Томского и Бухарина. Весь смысл кампании состоит в том, чтобы заткнуть возможных сторонников этой тройки и таким образом облегчить Сталину организационную расправу над ними. Все искусство кампании состоит в том, чтобы подвести партию к палачиным глазам к полному барьеру и исключить ее «приманку», когда у нее будет уже никаких выборов, что мы, большевики-ленинцы, непримиримо враждебны правым, устранившим и полуустраиваем, этого допустить не надо. Но мы хотим, чтобы с оппортунистическим правым криком расправы, за нами партия. А для этого первым делом надо «свистать глаз». Надо ей сказать, что делается за аппаратными кулаками и что там готовится в тайне и запертой двери.

Сталинская группа и левая тройка находятся в состоянии охоты. Члены ЦК и Бухарин заявил Каю о ну:

«Разногласия между нами и Сталиным во многом серьезнее всех бывших разногласий с нами. И Рыков и Томский (и другие) формулируют категорично так: было бы гораздо лучше если бы имели в Политбюро вместо Сталина — Зиновьева и Каменева».

### Документы:

1. Среда 11/7. О 4 ч. утра. Разговор с Сокольниковым. Изложил: 1) Дело важно гораздо больше, у Бухарина окончательный разговор со Сталиным. Вопрос о слиянии поставлен был конкретно. Калянин и Вильямовичи. Теперь относится дело к делу его уступок. 2) Бухарин дважды говорил: разве вы не понимаете, что я сейчас отдал бы Сталина за Зиновьева и Каменева. У Бухарина трагическое положение — больше всего боится, что вы скажете: линия Сталина правильная. 3) Четверки и пятёрки не слышны — диктуются. 4) На пленуме речь Сталина — две строки трюизма, подлинная — восстановительные деньги. Бухарин — трюизм: чтобы разжечь промышленность, нужна дым и протесты. Милославский: «ножницы будут еще долго, закрыть ножницы нельзя» (Троцкий до того хотел закрыть ножницы). Сокольников протаскивает трюизм. Молодой «середняк» окреп и потому пришел в столбовое. 5) Ответ Бухарина: теория даны ничем не отличается от теории Прозрачного, «ваши порочительные допущения». Ответ Томского: «если Молоков прав — то казав же перспектива», вы хотите пана без пана, кулаков и концессионеров, не выйдут. Рыков рассудит Калянина. Вывод: линия Сталина будет бить. Бухарин в трагическом положении: не хвалит Сталина. Подожидательная программа ищет вместе с нами. Бухарин сам хочет поговорить. Бюк для слияния Сталина. Вы для него, Х. У. Сталин игнорирует, что имеет вас в кармане.

2. Подтверждение буквально. Через час (11/7, 10 ч. утра) после моего приезда ко мне пришел мой предшественник и явился Бухарин — Сокольников, который к концу ушел. Вид изголодавшийся и с жемчужной до крайности. Очень возмущен, сказал следующее. Говорил час без перерыва. Записано как можно точнее: 1) никакого толку о слиянии (4—5) пошло. Но было много обвинений в его вопросе; 2) применение к ст. 2. Зиновьев было проинтервью Сталиным против меня, как компромисс с Молотовым, который был решительно против внесения статьи Зиновьева. Теперь к сути дела.

1) Дело в ЦК и в партии вшло так далеко, что вы (а также, вероятно, и троцкисты) неизбежно будете в него втянуты и будете играть в его решении важную роль.

Через посредство Сокольников Бухарин потупил и переговоры с Каменевым, о заключении блока для слияния Сталина, причем член Политбюро и член Коминтерна Бухарин приходит к слиянию с членом партии Каменевым — кооперативом, жалуюсь на то, что агенты ГПУ истребляют его по пятям. Вот как далеко зашла дело в Политбюро, под руководством Сталина. Партия ничего этого не подозревает. Сталин сознательно ее уводит, веля, что в Политбюро разногласия нет. Совершенно так же Сталин обманывал партию накануне 14-го съезда, утверждая, что д. «революционный» ЦК дарит единодушие. Сталин утверждает, что слухи о разногласиях выдуманы оппозиционерами. То же самое он говорил накануне 14-го съезда. Пусть же партия судит на основании документов, которые мы здесь доводим до ее сведения.

Эти документы таковы: 1) запись Каменевым разговора с Сокольниковым от 11/7. 2) запись Каменевым разговора с Бухариным 11/7. 3) запись Каменева Зиновьеву в Москве 12/7. Записи Каменевым доказывают, как видно, на словах сейчас же после бесед с Сокольниковым и Бухариным для чего, якобы с максималистской точностью интерпретировать Зиновьева о переговорах, что мы имеем дело с подлинными документами в этом неусомненном смысле, что с ними отнесем.

Вывод из этих документов совершенно ясен: партия с разнородными глазами ведет к новой катастрофе. Следишь себя может только сама партия. Для этого она должна сорвать с своих глаз повязку. Вопрос о линии партии, ее руководство должно решать честно подготавливая 16-й съезд. Выше упомянутой максималистской «самострижки», партии необходима честная дискуссия перед съездом. Партия должна свободно обсуждать три борющихся — и — левых, центристскую и правую.

Большевики и левые должны быть освобождены от тюрма и возвращены на съезд в партию. Гусевым клевету гласно пролетарского класса должен быть похвачен конец.

Партия может и должна возникнуть от бюрократической мочи и возродить подлинное большевистское единство и способ левых — левых.

### БОЛЬШЕВИКИ, ЛЕНИНЦЫ (ОППОЗИЦИЯ)

2) Когда и где будет ли по-прежнему, может быть еще не так быстро, но обе стороны еще обещают аннексировать к нам. Но, во всяком случае, в течение пары месяцев это неизбежно.

3) И, в-третьих, чтобы выразил ситуацию. Я знаю (или я полагаю), что я вам обратная и Сталинцы. Вы, конечно, как политики, будете пользоваться этим положением: «забывать цену», но я этого не боюсь. Пусть будет политическая линия и я хочу, чтобы вы ушли, вокруг чего идет борьба.

4) Каменев: «Д. серьезная ли борьба-то?». Бухарин: «Вот об этом я и хотел говорить. Мы считаем, что линия Сталина губительная для всей революции. С ней мы можем проиграть. Разногласия между нами и Сталиным во много раз серьезнее всех бывших у нас разногласий с нами».

И, Рыков и Томский односторонне формулируют положение так: было бы гораздо лучше, если бы имели сейчас в Политбюро вместо Сталина — Зиновьева и Каменева. Об этом я говорил с Рыковым и Томским совершенно открыто; а со Сталиным несколько недолго не разговаривая, это беспринципный интриган, который все подчинил сохранению своей власти. Момент теории ради того, кто в данный момент следует убрать. И, «серьезно» мы разругались с ним до «приманки», «жизни» и пр. Он теперь уступил, чтобы нас вывести. Мы это понимаем, но он так маневрирует, чтобы выставить нас разглагольщиками. Резюмируя принята односторонне, потому что он дезавуировал Молокова заявил, что на девять десятых признает мою декларацию, которую я прочел в «серьезно», но выиграл и в руки. (Кру нехотел дать в руки из одной бумажки).

Его сейчас теперь отбросить у нас Московскую и Ленинградскую «Правду» и сместить Угланова, который целиком с нами. Линия же его такая (высказано публично): 1) кампания в отношении зачет колоний, или, как он, как эксплуатацией райтов. Колонии у нас нет, ваймов не дают, поэтому наша основа: дым и крестьянства, и т. д. и т. д. что это тоже, что теория Прозрачного; 2) чем больше будет рост социализма — тем больше будет оппортунизм; 3) раз нужна дым и будет рост оппортунизма — нужно теория Прозрачного. Сталинцы и левые

A leaflet distributed in January 1929 by members of the Left Opposition. "To Party Conferences. They are Leading the Party with its Eyes Bound toward a New Catastrophe." Details of the meeting between Kamenev and Bukharin in July 1928 (see Chapter 6).



# 12. Defeat of the “Rightists”

In 1928, when the split in the Politburo had clearly emerged, Stalin returned to methods of factional conspiracy against its minority, which had successfully been used by the ruling factions in their struggle against the Left Opposition. The Stalin group in the Politburo began to meet on Mondays for a preliminary discussion of issues without the participation of Rykov, Bukharin and Tomskey, and then on Thursdays, the decisions that had been made beforehand at these factional meetings were formally confirmed by a majority of votes at an official session of the Politburo. In turn, immediately after the sessions of the Politburo, Bukharin met with his own disciples (the only factional formation which he dared to maintain) and informed them about what had occurred at these sessions.

However, the forces of these two upper-echelon factions were extremely uneven. In the second half of 1928, at the command of Stalin’s factional staff, which held the entire party apparatus in its hands, all party organizations in the country began to pass resolutions condemning the “right deviation” as the main danger, without naming for now the bearers of this label. As before, members of the party who voted for these resolutions knew nothing about the disagreements within the Politburo. Those who were close to the leaders of the “rightists” couldn’t help but recall Trotsky’s assessment of the “unanimity” of such meetings. In describing this stage in the struggle against the “right deviation,” A. Avtorkhanov writes:

“The soothing formula put into circulation by the Agitprop of the Central Committee simply said: ‘Vote for Stalin — you won’t be wrong.’ The most ardent among us responded with Trotsky’s formulation: ‘Not a party, but Stalin’s flock of voters.’”<sup>1</sup>

In the last months of 1928, Stalin struck the “rightists” with several new blows aimed at undermining the influence of Bukharin in the Comintern and of Tomskey in the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions [VTsSPS]. On 19 December, for the first time since the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, Stalin and Molotov took part in the work of the Presidium of the ECCI. Stalin gave a speech in which he declared that it was inadmissible “to tolerate any more an ‘order’ of things when rightists are poisoning the atmosphere with social-democratic ideological rubbish ... and conciliators pour water onto the mill of the rightists.”<sup>2</sup> At this session of the presidium, the figures closest to Bukharin in the Comintern, Humbert-Droz and Serra (A. Tasca), were condemned as “conciliators.” This opened the way for new splits and expulsions of “rightists” from the Western communist parties.

The most principled and farsighted foreign communists, who had come to the conclusion that Stalin was wrecking the Comintern, tried to warn the leaders of their parties against unquestioning obedience to Stalin’s dictates. In January 1929, after he had left Moscow, Angelo Tasca, who had worked as the representative of the Italian Communist Party in the Comintern, sent the Central Committee of his party a letter which said that “The Comintern no longer exists,” insofar as “it is in Stalin’s clutches.” Tasca wrote:

“Stalin is the ‘teacher and boss’ who leads everyone. Is he on top of the situation? Is he capable of shouldering such responsibility? I will answer directly: Stalin is immeasurably beneath doing so. Look at everything he has done, and you will not

find a single thought of his own. He digests other people's ideas, which he steals and then presents in schematic form, producing the impression of a strength of thought which in actuality does not exist. For him, ideas are pawns which he uses to win game after game. ... Stalin engages in plagiarism, for he can do nothing else; he is intellectually mediocre and barren, and for this reason he hates the intellectual superiority of Trotsky, Bukharin and others, and cannot forgive them for it; he uses their ideas from time to time depending on circumstances, and, having absorbed them, goes on the offensive against those he has robbed, because for him what is important is not principles, but the monopoly of power. ... He is a liquidator (while his hands are untied) of the very spirit of the October Revolution. Between Lenin and Stalin lies an abyss that is not quantitative, but qualitative. I believe that the greatest misfortune that could have befallen Soviet Russia after Lenin's death was the concentration of power in Stalin's hands. Both the Russian party and the rest of us will pay very dearly for not having taken into account Lenin's clear directives in this regard."<sup>3</sup>

After this letter, Tasca was expelled from the Italian Communist Party (ICP). Leadership of the party passed to Palmiro Togliatti, who increasingly revealed himself to be a faithful Stalinist. Earlier in 1926, Togliatti had failed to fulfill an assignment from Gramsci, who gave him a letter addressed to the Central Committee of the VKP(b) which condemned the methods of struggle being used by the ruling faction against the Left Opposition. Togliatti showed this letter only to Bukharin and followed the latter's advice not to hand it over officially to the CC, since, according to Bukharin, it would necessitate a reply and would lead to the worsening of relations between the ICP and the VKP(b). Having supported Bukharin on a number of issues at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, in the following months when Bukharin was subjected to fierce persecution, Togliatti joined in, having carried out, to use the words of Luigi Longo, a "re-deployment."<sup>4</sup>



*Mikhail Pavlovich Tomsy*  
(1880–1936)



*Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov*  
(1881–1938)

Having almost completely undermined Bukharin's position in the Comintern, the Stalin faction proceeded to attack Tomsy. At the Eighth Trade Union Congress at the end of December 1928, Kaganovich proposed that the communist faction of the congress declare the work of the leadership of the VTsSPS unsatisfactory, which would have meant the recall of Tomsy from his post as chairman

of the VTsSPS. Although this proposal was rejected and Tomsy was reelected to this post, Kaganovich was brought onto the presidium of the VTsSPS.<sup>5</sup> Evaluating this action as the creation of “dual-power” in the VTsSPS, Tomsy resigned. At the same time, as a sign of protest against the appointment of “political commissars” at *Pravda* and the ECCI, Bukharin also handed in his resignation from his posts at these bodies.

Nevertheless, the “troika,” which remembered all too well the bitter experience of past oppositions, avoided entering into open battle with Stalin. They decided to first issue their programmatic documents, once they had been provoked by Stalin to take this step. To submit the differences for review by the party higher-ups, Stalin chose a moment that was to his advantage: the appearance of the “Trotskyist” leaflet with the “Kamenev Transcript.” Immediately after this, Bukharin and Kamenev were summoned to appear before the CCC, where they admitted, with reservations, the accuracy of the contents of the “Transcript,” and referred to the leaflet as “Trotskyist intrigue.”

Only then did Stalin, who had long known about the contents of the conversation between Bukharin and Kamenev, call a joint session of the Politburo and the Presidium of the CCC, where he played his trump card for the first time. At this session, which took place on 30 January 1929, he focused attention on the fact that, despite repeatedly signing joint declarations about the absence of disagreements within the Politburo, Bukharin had enjoyed the support of Rykov and Tomsy in conducting behind-the-scenes negotiations with the Kamenev group about changing the economic policy and composition of the Politburo.

Under these extremely unfavorable conditions, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy made an attempt to launch a counter-offensive, charging the Stalin group with continuation of an adventuristic course in the economy, the imposition of bureaucratism in the party and degeneration of the Comintern. Bukharin’s speech was particularly sharp; he began to read a declaration stating that the Stalinists had violated decisions of the July and November plenums to cancel the extraordinary measures and support individual poor- and middle-peasant farming. Although he did not foresee the implementation of “complete collectivization” (which Stalin had not mentioned for the time being), Bukharin stressed that

“the nation is enduring a shortage of grain not thanks to the development of collective farms, but despite this development; this shortage of grain will sharpen if we tie all successes of our policy in the countryside over the next few years solely and exclusively to the successes of the collective-farm movement, which, of course, must be supported in every way possible. Simple arithmetic calculation shows us that in the next few years they (collective and state farms) cannot be the main source of grain. For a long time yet, the individual peasant farms will be the main source.”<sup>6</sup>

In his statement, for the first time Bukharin connected the accumulation of economic mistakes plunging the nation into an extremely severe economic position to the unbearable party regime in which fundamental economic problems

“are kept under wraps. That is why the entire party is discussing them, but ‘among themselves,’ in groups of two or three people. That is why party members have also created a double line: one, ‘to be voiced openly,’ the other, ‘to keep to oneself.’



Attending meetings, voting unanimously, and adopting official formulations are becoming a ritual, a mandatory party ceremony.”<sup>7</sup>

The command style of leadership that had been established in the VKP(b) also dominated in the Comintern, where, in dealing with fraternal parties, peremptory shouts replaced methods of persuasion, leading to the suppression of dissenting voices. The Stalinists greeted all these accusations being made by Bukharin with outcries: “Where did you get this from? Who’d you get it from? From Trotsky!”<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, without noticing it himself, Bukharin was almost repeating word for word the “Trotskyist” criticism of the party and Comintern regime. However, at the same time he firmly asserted that no one would be forcing him into a faction, that he stood only for the end of any fighting, and that he wanted to find common ground in the Politburo; he also wanted to return from “little politics” to big politics which, in crisis situations, “speaks *the truth about things* to the working class and counts on the masses...”<sup>9</sup>

The situation in which Bukharin found himself was made even more complicated by his need to give explanations for the main charge made against him — his attempt to organize “a bloc with the Trotskyists against the party and its CC.” After an “exchange of opinions” at a session of the Politburo and Presidium of the CCC, a commission was created with Ordzhonikidze at its head to review Bukharin’s declaration and the issue of his negotiations with Kamenev. The commission proposed a “compromise”: Bukharin would have to condemn his negotiations with Kamenev and acknowledge that his charges against the majority of the Politburo “were made by him rashly, in the heat of a polemic”; in exchange for this, all the documents dealing with Kamenev’s “Transcript,” and the transcripts of the speeches made at the session, would be “removed from circulation.” Bukharin would be guaranteed “all the conditions necessary for his normal work at the posts of senior editor of *Pravda* and secretary of the ECCI.”<sup>10</sup> Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy rejected this proposal. They declared that they could not change their views, and therefore were giving up the fight and going into retirement.

On 9 February, at the next session of the Politburo and Presidium of the Central Control Commission, the “troika” presented their joint statement. In it they assessed the commission’s draft of a resolution that reproduced Stalin’s description of their views and behavior as an attempt to remove them from the leadership and politically annihilate them. In rejecting the accusation of factionalism, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy declared that they never had acted against decisions of the Central Committee, but had only fought against the distortions of these decisions by the Stalin group, especially its emphasis on “extraordinary measures.” They protested that “questions of party leadership were decided by one person”; that Stalin and the party were regarded as “equal in magnitude”; and that any criticism of Stalin was viewed as an act against the party and CC.

In making this statement, even on the question of Stalin, the troika was now repeating what the Left Opposition had been saying. However, in contrast to the latter, the troika had not decided to demand Stalin’s removal from the post of general secretary. The February declaration stated:

“We only think that comrade Stalin must heed the advice (very wise) given by Lenin, not to retreat from a collective spirit in the leadership. We feel that comrade Stalin can and must be corrected, just like every other member of the Politburo, without his critic facing the risk of being turned into ‘an enemy of the party.’ To guarantee these elementary conditions for the work of Politburo members is indeed the task of the CC and CCC.”<sup>[11](#)</sup>

In its declaration, the “troika” expressed concern that “the entire country is worried about problems of grain and provisions, yet the conference of the proletarian party remains silent.” At the same time, “a torrent of rumors” is being spread “about deviations (repeating the same words ... millions of rumors and whispers about the rightists — Rykov, Bukharin, Tomsky and so forth).” The frame-up being launched against them was a true “Dreyfusiada,” constituting “a mockery of the elementary rules of conducting matters” in the party.<sup>[12](#)</sup>

The troika’s new declaration placed responsibility on the Stalin faction for the severe economic and financial situation in the country, expressed in semi-starvation in a number of regions, acute shortages of raw materials and manufactured goods, signs of inflation and difficulties in currency supplies. In criticizing Stalin’s theory of “tribute,” the declaration indicated that “tribute is a category in an exploitative economy. If the peasant pays a tribute, it means he is a *dannik* [tributary in ancient Rus’], exploited and oppressed; it means, from the standpoint of the state, he is not a citizen, but a subject.” The slogan of “tribute” was an ideological perpetuation of extraordinary measures and “the basis for passing from an offensive against the kulaks to an offensive against petty and minuscule peasant production.”<sup>[13](#)</sup>

The presentation by the “troika” of a programmatic declaration was interpreted by Stalin as evidence of the existence of a “special Bukharin group including Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky,” which its members supposedly had previously concealed from the party. Now they had decided to legalize the group in order to secure themselves freedom of factional activity.

Two months before Stalin had spoken of a principled difference between the “Notes of an Economist” and Frumkin’s position. Now he adopted the exact opposite approach, calling the “Notes of an Economist” “an anti-party, eclectic article, aimed at slowing the tempo of development in industry and changing our policy in the countryside in the spirit of Frumkin’s well-known letter.” Stalin called the thesis about the “military-feudal exploitation of the village” both “ludicrous” and needed by Bukharin in order to “take the kulaks under his protection, and in doing so he has confused and lumped together the laboring peasantry and the kulaks.”<sup>[14](#)</sup>

Declaring that, by threatening to resign, “the Bukharin group demands that the party radically change its policy in the spirit of this group,” Stalin “endorsed” the demand of a “majority of comrades” to firmly reject the resignation. Insofar as Rykov had withdrawn his resignation, Stalin concentrated the blow against Bukharin and Tomsky, declaring that their “present crimes” expressed an attempt to create a new oppositional platform. Calling the “troika” a “right-deviationist, capitulationist group, fighting not for the liquidation of capitalist elements in the city and countryside, but for their free development,” Stalin asserted that “we, the majority of the CC, are conducting ourselves with regard to the Bukharinists too liberally and patiently, and, by doing so, we perhaps are unwittingly encouraging their factional, anti-party ‘work.’”<sup>[15](#)</sup>

As had been indicated in the resolution of the April Plenum of the Central Committee, “the joint session of the Politburo of the CC and the Presidium of the CCC was unable to evaluate the declaration by Bukharin, Tomsy and Rykov from 9 February 1929, which constituted a factional platform.”<sup>16</sup> On the basis of this statement, one may draw the conclusion that the Stalin group declined to discuss this declaration, and simply rubber-stamped the resolution prepared by Ordzhonikidze’s commission. In its first section, “Behind-the-scenes attempts by comrade Bukharin to organize a factional bloc against the CC,” the conversation with Kamenev was called a “factional act” by Bukharin and Sokolnikov, and the behavior of Rykov and Tomsy, “who concealed from the CC and CCC the fact of behind-the-scenes negotiations known by them between comrade Bukharin with comrade Kamenev,” was labelled “absolutely impermissible.”

In the second section, “Where is comrade Bukharin’s factional activity leading?” claims of bureaucratization of the party, the absence of inner-party democracy, and so forth, were characterized as going over to Trotsky’s position, demonstrating “the full depth of comrade Bukharin’s fall.”<sup>17</sup>

A decision was made to submit a resolution “On Inner-Party Matters” for review by the upcoming plenum of the CC and to send it to party committees in the republics and provinces. After the adoption of this resolution, Bukharin and Tomsy once again announced their resignation, which provided a pretext a few months later for the April Plenum of the CC to accuse them of being unwilling to submit to the decisions of the Politburo demanding that they renounce their policy of resignations.

The “troika” was doomed to await their final “rout” at the next plenum of the CC. In the prelude to the plenum, a new campaign criticizing the “right deviation” was unleashed. Whereas previously this criticism had not referred to specific people, the local party conferences now began to pass resolutions with sharp condemnations of Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy (without publishing these resolutions in the press, for the time being).

The attack on Bukharin personally was supplemented by a resolution of the Presidium of the ECCI on 9 March, which expressed political no-confidence in Bukharin and requested that the Politburo release him from work in the Comintern.



*Mariya I. Ulyanova and Nikolai I. Bukharin*

The oppressive atmosphere created around the Bukharin group can be sensed in the statement sent by a member of the CCC, Mariya I. Ulyanova [Lenin's younger sister – *translator*], to the April Plenum of the CC and CCC. Unable to attend the plenum due to illness, Ulyanova recalled Lenin's Testament in this letter and the thought expressed in it that "not a single person, but only collegial work, can guarantee correct leadership and the unity of the party." Ulyanova emphasized that discrediting three major figures in the party, which would lead sooner or later to their removal from the Politburo, "is a threat to this collective leadership." Recalling Lenin's warnings about "the possibilities of a split from above," she noted that in the case of "working over" and amputating the three members of the Politburo, "the possibilities for the appearance of critical thought inevitably would be reduced in the party: it would be too easy for any self-criticism or criticism of party bodies and official figures to turn into 'deviations.'" Finally, Ulyanova pointed to the disconnect between the official, optimistic information about the situation in the nation and the alarming letters from localities describing violations of legality in the countryside, the worsening supply of produce in the cities, etc. "I consider it a service of comrades Rykov, Tomsy and Bukharin that they pose these major questions before the party, rather than remaining silent about them," wrote Ulyanova. "Therefore ... I request that the Plenum be informed that I am voting against the removal of these three comrades, or of any one of them individually, from the Politburo; I am against condemning or discrediting them."<sup>18</sup> This letter, however, was not read aloud at the plenum, but was returned to Ulyanova by Rudzutak, who was chairing. The reason given was that the draft of the plenum's resolution did not contain any proposals to remove Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsy from the Politburo.

The joint plenum of the CC and CCC opened on 16 April. A tone of shameless badgering of the “rightists” was set by the report “On Inner-Party Disagreements” delivered by Yaroslavsky, Stalin’s main assistant in the “struggle against oppositions.” This tone was echoed with special eagerness by young Stalinists yearning for power; Zhdanov, for instance unequivocally warned the Bukharinists: “We dealt with the Trotskyists, and the party as a whole will deal with you if you do not submit and acknowledge your mistakes.”<sup>19</sup>

However, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy refused to offer any public repentance. They once more protested against charges of factionalism, recalling that even in response to the hounding unleashed against them they never had publicly spoken out against the line adopted by the majority of the Politburo. Appealing to elementary principles of inner-party democracy, Rykov tried to prove that a struggle of opinions in the CC and Politburo by no means contradicted party unity. In a speech given immediately before voting on the resolution, he said:

“I am by no means concerned about myself: there are no elements of any kind of self-defense either with me, or with Bukharin, or with Tomsy. The directives taken with regard to us can harm us, or kill us politically: the party can and has the right to do this. I fear, however, that it might excessively harm the entire party, having become the starting point for an absolutely new stage in organizing the leadership and life of the whole party.”<sup>20</sup>

One of the most emphatic oppositional speeches at the plenum was delivered by Uglanov, who criticized the Stalinists for not wanting to acknowledge their own mistakes in managing the economy and conducting the grain procurement. Uglanov spoke about a feeling of “infallibility” which had arisen with “various members of the Politburo,” and sharply objected to Stanislav Kosior, who had declared that “we cannot allow having free critics in the Politburo.” With particular indignation, Uglanov condemned demands made at the plenum to remove the “troika” from the Politburo. Uglanov declared:

“The valiant comrade Postyshev has said here: ‘let’s take and drive out three leaders, the party will now cope with running the country even without leaders’ ... Removing Rykov, Tomsy and Bukharin will undoubtedly lead to weakening the leadership of our country and the world revolution. A blow against these comrades will result in the impoverishment of theoretical thought in our party.”<sup>21</sup>

The most pointed statement against the Stalin faction was the speech by Bukharin, which lasted for several hours. The position of the Bukharin group was comprehensively outlined for the last time in this speech.

Bukharin compared the methods used against the “troika” with medieval “civil execution,” where “they placed a man by a column of shame and, to the accompaniment of drum beats, said the most slanderous things about him without letting him say even one word the whole time.” Bukharin seemed to be warding off a parallel with the exact same methods that had been used against the Left Opposition when he insisted that his group had remained silent in the face of “widespread bombardment,” since they had not wanted to provide a reason for accusing them of “forcing” an inner-party discussion. Stressing that he and his supporters were in a situation in which “they would be persecuted even more if they tried to explain themselves,” Bukharin emphatically said that the “troika” had no desire to become an “‘opposition’ group, which would once more have to pass



through approximately the same stages as earlier oppositions had passed.” “You will not receive a new opposition! You will not have one! And not a single one of us will head a ‘new’ or ‘newest’ opposition,”<sup>22</sup> declared Bukharin to the plenum of the CC. He stated that, despite the refusal of the “troika” to engage in public “oppositional” actions, the majority of the Politburo of the CC had tried to “tarnish, sully, discredit and trample” them, so that later people would not speak about granting their request to resign, but about removing them because of sabotage. “The game here is absolutely clear.”<sup>23</sup>

In explaining his theoretical disagreements with the Stalin group, Bukharin criticized the formulation of the “tribute,” without, by the way, challenging it in essence, but only declaring that the word “tribute,” when applied to the peasantry, was a poor choice. He spoke more categorically about Stalin’s “theory” about the sharpening of the class struggle during the advance to socialism, turning attention primarily to its logical absurdity:

“According to this strange theory, it turns out that the further we go forward in our advance toward socialism, the greater the difficulties that accumulate, the more the class struggle sharpens, and at the very gates of socialism, we apparently must either begin a civil war, or die from starvation and fall in battle.”<sup>24</sup>

Bukharin repeated this thought when criticizing Kuibyshev, who “developed” Stalin’s thesis in the following way: “The withering away of classes — the final result of all our development — must and will, of course, proceed in conditions of a sharpening of class struggle.” Bukharin sarcastically declared that, according to this theoretical “discovery,” “the more rapidly classes wither away, the more the class struggle will intensify, which apparently will burst into the brightest flame precisely when there no longer will be any classes!”<sup>25</sup>

In the theoretical part of his speech, Bukharin clarified his position with regard to market relations. While stressing that “the form of market ties for many years will be the deciding form of economic ties,” he offered the qualification that he was not an advocate of an “unrestricted,” “free” market, which in a pure form does not exist even in contemporary monopoly capitalism with its gigantic centralization and concentration of production. Moreover, there could not be a “free play of economic forces” in the Soviet economy, where “the concentrated power of our state-economic apparatus”<sup>26</sup> is used for the regulation of market relations.

Bukharin stressed that his group had no disagreements with the majority of the Politburo in questions of economic strategy.

“How many times must we say that we are *for* industrialization, that we are *for* the accepted tempos, that we are *for* the proposed plan? How many times have we declared this! ... How many times must we say that we are for the collective farms, that we are for the state farms, that we are for great reconstruction, that we are for a decisive struggle against the kulak, in order for them to stop casting aspersions at us?”<sup>27</sup>

Bukharin felt that the main subject of genuine disagreements within the Politburo was the question of the systematic use of emergency measures. In this regard he declared that in the mid-1920s, investment in industry was accomplished by means of currency expenditures and monetary emission. When currency reserves and the possibilities of issuing more currency dried up, and the situation with grain farming grew more acute, it was necessary to introduce the first round of emergency measures.

For the fact that “emergency measures ... were necessary in their first round and developed on the basis of preceding errors,” and the onset of the economic crisis had not been foreseen in a timely fashion, Bukharin laid responsibility on the political leadership of the nation, including himself and his co-thinkers.<sup>28</sup>

Bukharin called the repeated application of extraordinary measures at the beginning of 1929 a serious mistake made by the majority of the Politburo, despite the opposition of his group. In this regard he referred to Molotov’s speech in the summer of 1928, where the latter spoke about a decisive refusal to employ emergency measures, insofar as their implementation as a prolonged or constant course in the countryside would have meant a policy of violence against the middle peasants.

Recalling statements by Stalin and Molotov at the Fifteenth Congress in 1927, that the idea of a compulsory loan from the well-to-do peasants “undermines NEP,” Bukharin noted that “we now have ‘extraordinary measures’ (far worse than a loan from the kulak for export!) becoming the norm,” and the “troika” is defamed for demanding that we “not forget about NEP.”<sup>29</sup>

Bukharin cited an excerpt from a Politburo resolution adopted in February 1929: “The party has managed to get by in this year without applying emergency measures, ... it has managed to maintain, on the whole, a tempo of grain procurement that is not bad for the USSR.” He then pointed out that within a few weeks these “wonderful forecasts were disproved by life.”<sup>30</sup>

Bukharin stressed that the systematic application of extraordinary measures signified, in essence, the abolition of NEP, i.e., “of relations through the market.” The intensification of direct administrative pressure on the peasantry would lead to a shrinkage of area sown by the peasants and, thereby, to a reduction of the grain coming in. Insofar as the export of grain was necessary for the import of machinery and equipment, it would be necessary to reduce domestic consumption.

The liquidation of market ties between the state and petty producers, the transformation of the seller of grain into a “*sdatchik*” [supplier], and the transformation of selling into a state obligation engenders other unpleasant consequences. There is an extraordinary growth in “costs of wringing out grain” — expenditures for maintaining officials, their travel costs to various locales, etc. The frequent shift in legislative norms and the absence of their elementary stability becomes one of the main reasons for bureaucratic voluntarism. The response of the peasantry to command and administrative pressure was the emergence of illegal grain markets, the sale of grain on the black market, which leads to a reduction in commodity circulation regulated by the state.

What alternative to the policy of emergency measures did Bukharin propose? Examining perspectives for long years ahead, he favored a combination of collective and state-farm construction with an increase in individual poor- and middle-peasant households. But at that time, such a course was not disputed in principle by Stalin and members of the Politburo who followed him. As far as current measures to overcome the food crisis, Bukharin proposed to develop a more flexible policy of purchase prices, making them not so strictly fixed, but differentiated depending on locality and time of year. Acknowledging that such a policy would give certain advantages to well-to-do layers in the countryside, Bukharin proposed that the surpluses they would accumulate could be taken away by

raising taxes, which would “put the kulaks in a very difficult position.” Bukharin protested only against individual taxes determined by administrative means, insofar as it would make possible arbitrary behavior by local authorities. He felt that individual taxation could be replaced with an even higher tax, but “according to the law.”

All these proposals failed to represent a serious alternative to Stalin’s policy. That is also how matters stood with the proposal by Bukharin and Rykov to purchase grain abroad on credit, as a temporary measure. Bukharin recognized that such a “dire measure” would require reductions in import expenditures for industrialization. But that was not the only issue. Neither emergency measures, nor the import of grain, made it possible to escape from the economic crisis. With regard to emergency measures, Bukharin directed the following question to the Stalinists:

“Today we have stored up grain for one day using all kinds of pressure, but what will happen tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow? What will happen then? We cannot determine policy for just one day! What escape from the situation do we have for the long term?”<sup>[31](#)</sup>

In turn, Ordzhonikidze told Bukharin that even his directive for the import of grain could not be sustained for a long time: “This year you solve difficulties with the import of grain, but how will you solve matters next year?”<sup>[32](#)</sup>

Thus, the economic portion of Bukharin’s program was not convincing enough, and the political part of this program (criticism of the bureaucratism of the apparatus and the demand to restore inner-party democracy) was not introduced by Bukharin at the plenum, evidently because he feared being accused once again of “repeating Trotskyist slander against the party.” As Stephen Cohen correctly notes, Bukharin at that time had virtually adopted “Trotskyist” views about the inner-party regime.

“Unlike Trotsky, however, having sanctioned its development, he was its prisoner. His dissent and accompanying pleas for the toleration of critical opinion in 1928–1929 were regularly rebuffed with quotations from his own, earlier sermons against the Left’s ‘factionalism’...”<sup>[33](#)</sup>

Feeling, on the basis of previous experience in the inner-party struggle, that a charge of “Trotskyism” was the most effective polemical argument, an unbeatable card of sorts, Bukharin tried to re-direct this accusation at the majority of the Politburo, which, as he put it, had arrived at a “complete political capitulation to the Trotskyists.” “The influence of oppositional Trotskyist ideology”; “stale slander lying around in Trotskyist garbage”; “the repetition of false attacks against me borrowed from Trotskyist cheat sheets”; “a suspicious intellectual kinship between the Trotskyist platform and the catalog of charges now being made against me” — such is a far from complete list of the philippics directed by Bukharin against Stalin and his allies. “Capitulation to the Trotskyists” was detected by Bukharin even in the fact that the resolution about the Five-Year Plan did not contain the ritual formulation that he had proposed about the struggle against the “Trotskyist danger.”



*Stalin and Bukharin in October 1929*

Without reacting to these accusations with a single word, Stalin concentrated the plenum's attention on the more "obvious" phenomenon of Bukharin's "Trotskyist fall," charging him with "conspiring with yesterday's Trotskyists" and trying to form a factional bloc with them against the CC.

Bukharin's situation was made more onerous by the fact that participants at the plenum were provided the newly published issue of *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik* [The Socialist Herald], which contained the "Kamenev Transcript." In the words of Bukharin himself, he was forced to hear from all sides at the plenum: "Look how low he has fallen, Bukharin, even *The Socialist Herald* is celebrating its victory and printing his slanderous allegations about Stalin."<sup>34</sup>

Placed in a defensive position by numerous demands that he give an explanation to the plenum about his negotiations with Kamenev, Bukharin once again acknowledged that these discussions had been a political mistake on his part, and reduced their meaning to a request that the Zinovievists "not add their hand again to the persecution which I have endured."<sup>35</sup>

Of course, to members of the CC, it was clear that the "persecution" coming from the Zinovievists, who not long ago had been "thrown out" of the party and had only recently returned to it with confessions of their own "mistakes," could not in any serious way weaken Bukharin's position. Recognizing how unconvincing his explanations were, Bukharin therefore made an attempt to launch a counter-offensive. He declared that accusations of an attempt by him to organize a bloc with "yesterday's Trotskyists," had a goal of "*camouflaging another intended 'bloc'* that was now being formed by several comrades from the Politburo with several former Trotskyists."<sup>36</sup> Bukharin tried to



reinforce this insinuation with excerpts from a letter by Preobrazhensky that had been seized by the GPU. The letter stated that “our disagreements (with the Stalinists – *V. R.*) on a number of the most important problems of economic policy have drastically decreased.”<sup>37</sup>

After hearing the arguments by Bukharin and his supporters, Stalin delivered a wide-ranging speech which he began, as he had done at the most acute moments of struggle with the oppositions, with a statement that he did not intend to “touch on those hints and veiled accusations of a personal nature, that were scattered throughout the speeches given by comrades from the Bukharin opposition.”<sup>38</sup> In contrast to the Bukharinists, who had spoken of the presence among the arguing sides of merely various shades in interpreting the party’s policy, Stalin declared the existence of two principally opposed political lines: the line of the Politburo majority and the line of the Bukharin group.

In directing his main blow right at Bukharin, Stalin tried first of all to debunk his reputation as a leading Marxist theoretician. Citing propositions from Bukharin’s works, beginning in 1924, he constructed “an anti-Marxist and anti-Leninist theory” from them. Undisturbed by the fact that precisely this theory had constituted the ideological credo of the ruling faction in 1925–1927, Stalin claimed that earlier it had supposedly “lain beneath the surface” and therefore “it had been possible not to pay any attention to it.” Now, however, it must be “smashed as an incorrect and harmful theory,” insofar as “the petty-bourgeois elements that have risen up in recent years have begun to breathe life into this anti-Marxist theory, lending it an urgent character.”<sup>39</sup>

Taking advantage of the fact that Bukharin had not been ready to demonstrate the same degree of steadfastness and consistency in defending his own views that the previous oppositions had done, Stalin hurled sharp accusations at him that previously he had not even directed at the “Trotskyists.” Thus, he declared that Bukharin had borrowed the thesis of the military-feudal exploitation of the peasantry “from the arsenal of the leaders of Miliukov’s Kadets. ... Bukharin sings along with Messieurs the Miliukovs, he drags along behind enemies of the people.”<sup>40</sup>

By bringing the concept of “enemy of the people” into the party lexicon for the first time, and implicitly directing it against one of the party’s leaders, Stalin incidentally made one more sinister statement, the likes of which had not been uttered even during the sharpest moments of struggle against the previous oppositions. He used an admission that Bukharin had blurted out at the height of the struggle against the opposition in 1923 to prove the “danger” of factional formations in the party. He had said that in 1918, the Left SRs had proposed that he, as leader of the “left communists,” form a coalition government without Lenin’s participation in order to declare war against Germany. Basing himself on this admission, Stalin declared:

“The history of our party knows examples, as when Bukharin, during the Brest peace negotiations, under Lenin, found himself in a minority on the peace question, ran to the Left SRs, to the enemies of our party, conducted behind-the-scenes negotiations with them and tried to form a bloc with them against Lenin and the CC. *What kind of an arrangement he arrived at with the Left SRs, unfortunately, we still do not know.* But we do know that the Left SRs intended at that time to arrest Lenin and carry out an anti-Soviet overthrow”<sup>41</sup> (my italics – *V. R.*).



Thus, when Bukharin was still a member of the Politburo, the “brilliant master of administering small doses” paved the way for what would be said nine years later at the trial of the “right-Trotskyist bloc”: the concocted version of the “conspiracy” between Bukharin and the Left SRs to arrest and murder Lenin.

During his entire speech, Stalin paid relatively little attention to defending his own strategic line in the realm of economic policy. He categorically rejected the proposal from Rykov and Bukharin to import grain at the expense of credits from capitalist countries. He argued that it was necessary to preserve hard currency for the import of industrial equipment; he also cited political reasons: it was necessary to display “proper steadfastness and tenacity, without yielding to false promises about the supply of grain on credit, and by showing the capitalist world that we will manage without the grain imports.”<sup>42</sup> If the Politburo were to agree to this proposal by the “rightists,” Stalin asserted, the country would not receive credits for financing industrial orders.

Explaining that the withholding of grain, reduction of area sown, and so forth resulted from the strengthening of the kulak and his political hostility to Soviet power, Stalin insisted on implementing extraordinary measures in the future as well, insofar as “the kulak will not give up a sufficient quantity of grain voluntarily, of his own accord.”<sup>43</sup> Reinforcing conceptions about “the intensification of resistance of all class enemies of every kind,” Stalin declared that “Shakhty-wreckers are now sitting in all branches of our industry. Many of them have been uncovered, but many of them have not.”<sup>44</sup> Stalin viewed the “subversive work” of saboteurs and the resistance of peasants to emergency measures as links in one chain, as proof that “capitalist elements have no desire to leave the scene voluntarily; they are resisting and will resist socialism, for they see that the last days of their existence are approaching.”<sup>45</sup> Later on, while referring to the “material” of ever newer fabricated cases and trials, Stalin would repeatedly cart out the thesis of the fatal sharpening of the class struggle in order to use it, in the end, to annihilate the overwhelming majority of the party.

During all the proceedings at the plenum, Stalin never even hinted at the possibility of “complete collectivization.” While stressing the gradual character of uniting peasant households into collective farms, he declared:

“The individual poor- and middle-peasant farm, when it comes to supplying industry with food and raw materials, plays and will still play a predominant role in the near future.”<sup>46</sup>

In decisions of the April plenum, the orientation to increasing the tempos of industrialization was combined with the establishment of moderate tempos of collectivization. This orientation was reinforced in decisions of the Sixteenth Conference of the VKP(b) which opened a few days after the plenum. Resolutions indicated that small-scale peasant farming had by no means exhausted and would not soon exhaust the possibilities that it had, and that in the next years, given the maximum possible development of the state and collective farms, would provide the basic increase in agricultural production. A resolution of the conference emphasized:

“The development of large-scale social agriculture in the Soviet land proceeds not by devouring, ruining, destroying, and devastating small and very small farms, nor by fighting against them, but by their economic elevation, growth, and pushing to a

higher level of technology, culture and organization. Large-scale social agriculture is not juxtaposed to individual poor-peasant and middle-peasant farms as a force that is hostile to them, but draws close to them as a source of aid to them, as an example of the superiority of large-scale economy, as the organizer of influencing them in the matter of gradually uniting them in large-scale agriculture.”<sup>47</sup>

Rykov delivered a report at the conference on the Five-Year Plan. He presented two variants of the Five-Year Plan worked out by Gosplan: an initial or minimal one, and an optimal one, which according to basic indicators was approximately 20 percent higher than the former. Both variants included fully achievable, realistic figures for industrialization and collective-farm construction.

The creators of the plan soberly evaluated the technological and economic backwardness of Soviet Russia, noting that according to its national income and output of capital, it was on a level achieved by the United States fifty years before. They realistically described critical problems in the cities, where real wages of the workers had practically not risen, and unemployment had not fallen, continuing to remain at a level of 1.5 million people. The optimal variant of the Five-Year Plan adopted by the conference set the overcoming of these adverse tendencies as its goal. It foresaw an annual growth in industrial production of 21–25 percent, i.e., a somewhat higher tempo than Trotsky had predicted in 1925, when he was accused by the ruling faction of advocating “super-industrialization.”

According to control figures confirmed by the conference, the relative weight of the collective and state farms in the gross output of agriculture was supposed to be 15 percent in 1932–1933. In other words, throughout the entire period of the first Five-Year Plan, the basic mass of peasant households was supposed to be concentrated, as before, in the individual sector. The proposal made by several delegates at the conference to shift to dekulakization was rejected. Thus, the decisions of the Sixteenth Conference by no means heralded the rapid onset of the “great break-through.”

At the same time, the April plenum and the Sixteenth Conference of 1929 objectively paved the way for Stalin’s new ultra-left zigzags, insofar as their resolutions “on inner-party affairs” fully blocked the resistance of the Bukharin group, who until that time had served as a weighty, albeit unstable, barrier to Stalin’s adventuristic course. In the plenum’s resolution (published only in 1933 with an addendum to it by the Politburo and the Presidium of the CCC from 9 February 1929), Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy were declared leaders of a “right deviation” that they had voted to struggle against at the previous plenum of the CC.

The resolution of the November plenum of 1928 stated that “a right (openly opportunistic) deviation”<sup>48</sup> was only emerging in the party, and its bearers were not listed by name. The April plenum of 1929, however, directly classified the views of the Bukharin group as “incompatible with the general line of the party” and indicated that it “had in fact passed from vacillation between the party’s line and the line of the right deviation on basic issues of our policy to a defense of the positions of the right deviation.”<sup>49</sup>

Of the nearly 250 people participating in the plenum’s work, only ten voted against this resolution and three abstained.

The April plenum completely confirmed the correctness of the prognosis made by Trotsky, who had warned as early as 1926–1927 that “the removal of today’s (left – *V. R.*) opposition would signify the inevitable and actual transformation of the remnants of the old group in the CC into an opposition,”<sup>50</sup> and that whoever “had ‘railed’ against Trotsky on command yesterday, and Zinoviev today, would rail against Bukharin and Rykov tomorrow.”<sup>51</sup>

Many delegates at the plenum insisted on expelling Bukharin and Tomsy from membership in the Politburo. In these circumstances, as in earlier very acute moments of struggle against the opposition, Stalin adopted the role of “peacemaker,” considering that “we can manage for the time being without such an extreme measure,” and speaking in favor of the softest of organizational measures that had been proposed with regard to the leaders of the discredited “right opposition.” The plenum accepted the proposal that Stalin called “sufficient”:

“to remove Bukharin and Tomsy from the posts they occupy ... and warn them that, given the slightest attempt on their part to violate the decrees of the CC and its organs, they will immediately be removed from the Politburo, as violators of party discipline.”<sup>52</sup>

In fulfilment of this resolution, Tomsy was removed from the post of Chairman of the VTsSPS, and Bukharin from his post as main editor of *Pravda*. (Rykov remained at the post of Chairman of the Sovnarkom until December 1930). The vacant posts were filled with faithful and obedient Stalinists. Mekhlis became editor of *Pravda*, and Shvernik the chairman of the VTsSPS. The most serious organizational changes were made with regard to Uglanov, whom the Plenum removed from posts as candidate-member of the Politburo, member of the Orgburo, and secretary of the CC.

The resolution of the April plenum emphatically stressed the need to “establish special measures — up to expulsion from the CC and from the party — able to guarantee the secrecy of decisions made by the CC and Politburo of the CC and excluding the possibility of informing the Trotskyists about matters of the CC and Politburo.”<sup>53</sup> The adoption of this point indicates not only that the Left Opposition, even after Trotsky’s exile, was viewed by both factions of the Politburo as a serious political force, but also that, in the polemic between these factions, a major role was played by mutual accusations of Trotskyism or “semi-Trotskyism.”

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1. A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiya vlasti*, p. 93.

2. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, p. 302 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 318].

3. *Istoriia i stalinizm*, M., 1991, pp. 170–171.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

5. The reaction of the trade union delegates to these events can be seen in the diary entry of the old Bolshevik Boris Kozelev, which stated that the corridors of the Palace of Labor (that was what the building which housed the VTsSPS was then called) “hummed with indignation” over the way Stalin was trampling trade-union democracy. One of Kozelev’s acquaintances discovered this entry, stole the diary and passed it on to the CCC, after which Kozelev was expelled from the party. Kozelev’s diary was cited at the Sixteenth Congress of the VKP(b) in 1930 as proof of the “factional” work being conducted by Tomsy and his supporters in the trade-union movement.

6. See: G. A. Bordiugov, V. A. Kozlov, *Istoriia i kon’iunktura*, p. 97.

7. Ibid., p. 95.
8. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1929, № 1–2, p. 17.
9. G. A. Bordiugov, V. A. Kozlov, *Istoriia i kon''iunktura*, p. 95.
10. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 6–7 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, pp. 7–8].
11. Cited in: G. A. Bordiugov, V. A. Kozlov, *Istoriia i kon''iunktura*, p. 98.
12. XVI S''ezd VKP(b). Stenotchet, p. 325.
13. *Bukharin: chelovek, politik, uchenyi* [Bukharin: Man, Politician, Scholar], M., 1990, pp. 115–116.
14. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 319–320 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 333–334].
15. Ibid., pp. 324–325. [Ibid., pp. 339–340].
16. *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh*, vol. 4, p. 429.
17. Ibid., pp. 437, 441.
18. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, № 1, pp. 126–127.
19. *Pravda*, 3 February 1989.
20. Ibid.
21. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1990, № 2, pp. 123–124.
22. N. I Bukharin, *Problemy teorii i praktiki sotsializma*, [Problems of the Theory and Practice of Socialism] M., 1989, pp. 253–254.
23. Ibid., p. 306.
24. Ibid., pp. 263–264.
25. Ibid., p. 264.
26. Ibid., pp. 281, 293–294.
27. Ibid., p. 273.
28. Ibid., pp. 275–276.
29. Ibid., pp. 262–263.
30. Ibid., p. 258.
31. Ibid., p. 282.
32. Ibid., p. 289.
33. S. Koen, *Bukharin. Politicheskaiia biografiia*, M., 1988, p. 390. [Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution. A Political Biography, 1888–1938*, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 325].
34. *Znamia*, 1988, № 11, p. 123.
35. N. I Bukharin, *Problemy teorii i praktiki sotsializma*, p. 303.
36. While deriding the factional maneuvers of the former duumvirs, Trotsky on 14 July 1929 wrote: “In the struggle between Stalin and Bukharin, both sides, like clowns in a circus, hurl charges of Trotskyism at each other” (*Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1929, № 1–2, p. 150).
37. N. I Bukharin, *Problemy teorii i praktiki sotsializma*, pp. 302–303.
38. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, p. 2 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, p. 2].
39. Ibid., pp. 33–34 [Ibid., p.36].
40. Ibid., p. 56 [Ibid., p. 59].
41. Ibid., pp. 100–101 [Ibid., p. 106].
42. Ibid., p. 94 [Ibid., p. 99].
43. Ibid., p. 61 [Ibid., p. 64].
44. Ibid., p. 14 [Ibid., p. 15].

[45.](#) Ibid., p. 37 [Ibid., p. 40].

[46.](#) Ibid., p. 59 [Ibid., p. 62].

[47.](#) *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh*, vol. 4, p. 458.

[48.](#) Ibid., p. 381.

[49.](#) Ibid., pp. 432, 435.

[50.](#) *Kommunisticheskaia oppositsiia v SSSR*, vol. 2, M., 1990, p. 80.

[51.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Stalinskaia shkola fal'sifikatsii*, M., 1990, p. 143 [Leon Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, p. 109].

[52.](#) *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh*, vol. 4, p. 436.

[53.](#) Ibid.



# БЮЛЛЕТЕНЬ ОППОЗИЦИИ

## (БОЛЬШЕВИКОВ-ЛЕНИНЦЕВ)

№ 1-2

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### ОТ ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВА

Октябрьская революция проходит через глубокий кризис. Высшим выражением его является бешеная борьба сталинской бюрократии против пролетарского крыла партии, или так называемой оппозиции. Эта последняя в несравнимых ни с чем по трудности условиях, ведет непримиримую борьбу за марксизм, за Октябрь, за международную революцию. Отдельные элементы с почтенными именами колеблются или отходят. Грандиозные эпохи, как наша, быстро пожирают или опустошают людей. Но они же ускоряют воспитание нового поколения и дают ему необходимый закал. Партийная молодежь, вступившая в ряды большевизма накануне Октября или в годы гражданской войны, уже выдвинула из своей среды целый слой выдающихся по энергии, преданности и ясности мысли представителей оппозиции. Беспощадные преследования производят в среде этой молодежи необходимый отбор.

Борьба большевиков-ленинцев (оппозиции) уже имеет свою большую историю, и свою немалую литературу. Собрать эту литературу и издать по крайней мере наиболее важные ее документы, является совершенно неотложной

задачей, которую мы надеемся постепенно разрешить в ряде книг, сборников, и других изданий.

Не менее важно, однако, обслуживать сегодняшний день оппозиционной борьбы, при помощи правильно поставленной информации. На страницах этих бюллетеней мы будем публиковать текущие документы оппозиционной борьбы, как и вообще информацию о жизни ВКП и советской республики.

Оппозиция представляет собой международную фракцию и только как таковая, имеет право на существование. Вот почему мы будем на этих страницах давать документы, относящиеся к борьбе большевиков-ленинцев не только в советской республике, но и во всем мире.

Настоящее издание находится в тесной связи с соответствующими изданиями большевистской оппозиции во всех странах.

Непосредственная цель этого издания состоит в том, чтоб обслуживать практическую борьбу в советской республике за дело Маркса и Ленина.

# 13. The Alternative of the Left Opposition in 1929

Despite Bukharin's assertions about the "impending bloc" between the Stalinists and "Trotskyists," the Stalin faction devoted no less attention to the struggle against the Left Opposition than to that against the "rightists." It goes without saying that the main target of this struggle continued to be Trotsky.

Immediately after Trotsky's exile, the foreign press began to spread the rumor that the actual goal of this action was not punishment for being in the opposition, but the infiltration of Trotsky into the revolutionary movement in the West in order to initiate its new upsurge. Dmitry Volkogonov believes that this story was launched by Stalin in order to increase the hostility of the White emigration and ruling circles in capitalist countries against Trotsky.<sup>1</sup> In any case, for several years after his deportation, neither Trotsky nor his foreign friends managed to win permission from a single European government to admit him into their country.

While he was located on the Turkish island of Prinkipo, Trotsky immediately resumed his literary and political activity. The very fact of his appearances in the foreign press was used by the Stalinists to extort a new wave of renunciations from his supporters.



*Ivar Tenisovich Smilga*  
(1892–1936)



*Ivan Nikitich Smirnov*  
(1881–1936)

The first among the exiled leaders of the opposition to capitulate were Radek, Preobrazhensky, and Smilga. After their correspondence, which indicated their growing political vacillation, fell into the hands of the GPU, they were called to Moscow for negotiations. As he was returning to Moscow, Radek happened to meet with a young oppositionist at one of the railroad stations. In a conversation with him, Radek described his present political mood in the following way: “The situation in the CC is catastrophic. The rightists and the centrists are preparing to arrest each other. The right-centrist bloc has disintegrated, and a ferocious battle is being waged against the rightists. The rightists are strong. Their sixteen votes (apparently, at the April plenum – *V. R.*) might double or triple. There is no bread in Moscow. The discontent of the working masses is growing and may turn into a rebellion against Soviet power. We are on the eve of peasant uprisings. This situation is forcing us to enter the party at whatever price ... I have broken completely with L. D. [Trotsky]. From now on he and I are political enemies.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, Radek explained his capitulation as a necessary step in “helping” Stalin in his battle against the “rightists.”

On the advice of Radek and Smilga, Ivan Vrachëv signed the capitulationist “declaration of the three” that was published in *Pravda* on 10 July 1929. He recounts how this declaration was preceded by long “bargaining” in the CCC over various formulations. Emelian Yaroslavsky conducted all these negotiations on behalf of Stalin. Stalin never bothered himself with such conversations. Of course, they were forced to confess some things that were contrary to reality.”<sup>3</sup>

The negotiations with Ivan Nikitich Smirnov took longer. In July 1929, he had sent a letter to exiled oppositionists which said: “The majority of party apparatchiks who participated in our exile will savagely oppose our entry into the party. I know that many of the high party officials will insist on our self-deprecation.” Smirnov felt that it would be necessary to provide a statement in which Trotsky’s articles in the foreign press were acknowledged to be a mistake. At the same time, it should say that, although Trotsky had been “forced into horrible and unheard of conditions of exile,” he remained true to communism.<sup>4</sup>

Then, Smirnov presented a draft statement to the CCC which said:

“The system of repression used against the opposition has sharpened the inner-party struggle to the extreme and made the elimination of disagreements difficult. In order to strengthen the party most rapidly, I consider it my duty to tell the leadership that the cancellation of Article 58, exile and imprisonment is an extremely urgent and extremely important act, facilitating the goal of unification. ... I have no doubt that the party will find a way to return to its ranks the entire opposition, from the rank-and-file worker to L. D. Trotsky, whose fate is inseparably linked to the fate of the working class.”<sup>5</sup>

When he had read this statement, Yaroslavsky called it unsatisfactory, after which the document was reworked and signed by Smirnov and Boguslavsky. After showing this variant to Stalin and other members of the Politburo, Yaroslavsky proposed that new changes be made. As a result, the final text of the statement, dated 27 October, contained an addition which fundamentally changed its initial meaning:

“While sharply condemning the activity of L. D. Trotsky, expressed in his articles in the bourgeois press and in his attempts to create a special organization of foreign groups of the opposition, we declare that we are breaking with him since we feel that his activity is harming our party and the Soviet state.”<sup>6</sup>

A significant portion of the oppositionists who had finished their term of exile endorsed this declaration. The gathering of signatures proceeded under the secret control of the CCC and the OGPU, who had sent many informers and provocateurs into the ranks of the Trotskyists.

Many oppositionists, like the Radek group, justified their capitulation by claiming that the differences between them and the party leaders were being smoothed over, since the latter had turned to a fight against the “rightists” and the kulaks. More prosaic motives often stood behind this justification: the yearning to return from the severe conditions of exile into the ranks of the bureaucracy in order to once again acquire the right to the privileges “accorded” it. In this regard, Trotsky later recalled the words of Krestinsky’s wife: “We have to abandon the opposition, we have to enjoy life.”<sup>7</sup>

Other oppositionists consciously expressed insincere repentance so that, after returning to the party, they could once again continue opposition activity. Such capitulators, according to Trotsky, “were trying to play hide-and-seek with the historical process by pretending to be Stalin’s co-thinkers, while awaiting a more favorable moment in protective coloring and then acting openly. These actions are fundamentally false, from the standpoint of revolutionary politics, because capitulation is not a secret or conspiratorial device of military cunning, but an open political act which quickly brings political consequences in its wake, namely the strengthening of Stalin’s positions and the weakening of the opposition.”<sup>8</sup>

Using the full power of the party and repressive apparatuses, Stalin not only tried to obtain capitulations from oppositionists who had not yet surrendered, but also tried to force capitulators “of the first wave” to make new statements about their hostility to “Trotskyism” and their loyalty to the “general line.” During the purge of 1929, Kamenev spoke “very badly” about the “right deviation” and declared that Trotsky was conducting “counter-revolutionary work” abroad. At the end of 1929, Kamenev and Zinoviev sent declarations to the CC and CCC containing assurances that, after the Fifteenth Congress, they “no longer had anything in common with Trotsky, or with any Trotskyists.” Nevertheless, on 31 December 1929, the CCC reprimanded Kamenev for having met with “Trotskyists” (although, while not denying the fact of this single meeting, Kamenev stated that he had spoken out against the Trotskyists as it was taking place).<sup>9</sup>

Increasingly severe punishments were meted out for the slightest suspicion of support for Trotsky. This is because, in his works that were steadily seeping into the USSR, Trotsky upheld the steadfastness of his co-thinkers and warned them against illusions spread by capitulators about the character of Stalin’s “left” policy. Of course, for Trotsky, news about disavowals by his recent supporters was a great personal blow. This applied especially to Smilga, since Trotsky had appealed to other oppositionists to “emulate” him before his exile to Alma-Ata. However, upon receiving this news, he immediately spoke against the attempts of Stalinist propaganda to use this new wave of capitulations as a “winning card,” as proof of the “disintegration of the Trotskyist opposition” and of the “twilight of Trotskyism.” In this regard, he recalled that three to four years earlier, the Stalinists had hastened to declare the “*death* of Trotskyism. This was then followed by its *rout*. Then, in the

immortal words of Molotov — came the ‘*coffin*’ and the ‘*lid*’ for Trotskyism. Now, once again, the twilight of Trotskyism approaches, as well as its disintegration. This is happening after its *death*, after the *coffin*, and after the *lid*! There is an old popular belief: whoever is buried alive will live a long life. A belief that is quite timely.”<sup>[10](#)</sup>

Trotsky saw one of the most important political tasks to be the exposure of arguments by the “rightists” that Stalin had armed himself with the platform of the Left Opposition and was thereby proving its bankruptcy in practice. He stressed that Stalin’s present yearning to accelerate industrialization and collectivization was drawing him closer to the opposition only superficially. “It is true,” he wrote, “that Stalin became frightened when he empirically bumped his forehead against the consequences of the ‘farmer’ (kulak) course, which he so blindly implemented in 1924–27. It is also true that as he made his leap to the left, Stalin used fragments of the opposition platform.” However, the Left Opposition had always proceeded from an understanding that “socialist industrialization assumes a major plan that is thoroughly thought through, where the direction of internal development is tightly bound up with an ever-expanding use of the world market.”<sup>[11](#)</sup> Lacking such a strategic plan, Stalin was capable of conducting only a policy of empirical zigzags, which merely made the economic and political situation of the country worse.

Trotsky spoke just as definitively about the illusions of several oppositionists that confirmation of the Five-Year Plan testified to the acceptance by the party leadership of demands contained in the opposition platform to strengthen the planned elements in managing the national economy. Without disputing the achievability of the Five-Year Plan’s control figures, Trotsky stressed that successfully carrying out the plan required political conditions which were absent in the country as before: the independent initiative of the party, and freedom of inner-party criticism that extended even as far as activities of the Central Committee. He wrote:

“Until now we have felt that all five-year plans have weight and value insofar as their roots lie in correct methods of economic leadership, and especially in the political leadership of the party and Comintern. For a Marxist, therefore, the principled orientation of the party and the methods of party policy are decisive, and not the ‘concrete figures of the Five-Year Plan,’ whose fate lies wholly in the future.”

Meanwhile, having accepted a “bureaucratic five-year plan,” the Stalinist upper echelons freed themselves as before from any criticism coming from the party masses. As a result, the “general line turns into the line of the general secretariat.”<sup>[12](#)</sup>

In characterizing the regime that had developed in the party and Comintern, Trotsky returned to the principled question of legalizing factions inside the party. Now, he unequivocally formulated his own position on this question, relying on the entire experience of the development of the VKP(b) and the Comintern, which had shown that perpetuation of the ban on factions leads to full suffocation of the ideological life of the communist parties. He recalled that it was under extreme economic and political conditions that the Tenth Party Congress of March 1921 adopted the resolution to ban factions. In making his argument he noted that “a rather free inner-party regime, given the cordial efforts of all responsible elements in the party, allows one to reduce to a minimum the factionalism that within certain boundaries is *inevitably* connected with the life and development of the party.



What, however, did the pathetic epigones do? They turned the ban on factions into an absolute, extended it to all parties of the Comintern, i.e., to those who were only taking their first steps; elevated the leadership of the Comintern above criticism; and placed each communist before the alternative: grovel before any Yaroslavsky ... or, find oneself outside the party.”<sup>13</sup> Under the flag of a “struggle against Trotskyism,” the result of such a regime became the expulsion from the Comintern of a majority of its founders, pioneers, and Lenin’s comrades-in-arms in all parties. All this led to the dismal weakening of the international communist movement, to the reduction of the membership and influence of the communist parties in the West.

Trotsky’s ideas found a response and further development in the works of those oppositionists who stubbornly refused to capitulate to Stalin. These works, signed by the real names of their authors, were distributed throughout the country, redirected to Trotsky and printed on the pages of the *Bulletin of the Opposition*. The theoretical activity of Khristian G. Rakovsky was particularly energetic. In his article, “Evaluation of the Situation,” written in April 1929, he stressed that accusing the Left Opposition of factionalism “is a mockery of the party when it is clearly recognized that the party has a number of factional divisions, that the party is crumbling into many deviations.” This concealed factional fragmentation was a hideous offspring of Stalin’s party regime, the result of concentrating political power in the hands of a narrow party upper stratum, of its distrust in the party masses and the class forces which were called upon to serve as the social base of support for the party. “The true advocate of a monolithic party and the unhypocritical enemy of factionalism is one who fights against the incorrect line of the leadership, against apparatus absolutism, for party democracy, for allowing and observing those guarantees which the party statutes provide for each party member.”<sup>14</sup>

Rakovsky named the signs of the profound crisis in the country that had emerged between the Fifteenth Congress and the Sixteenth Conference: the repeated disruption of grain procurements and a return to emergency measures; the reduction of workers’ real wages; growing difficulties in supplying the cities with grain and industry with fuel; the introduction of ration cards (passbooks) and “lines” for items of prime necessity; increased administrative pressure of enterprise directors on workers, and so forth. The Stalinists’ explanation of these crisis phenomena as the influence of capitalist



*Rakovsky and Trotsky, 1924*

encirclement and the resistance of class enemies within the country were assessed by Rakovsky as a cowardly attempt to remove responsibility from the party leadership for the unforgivable errors they had made. He stressed that the country had known incomparably more difficult international and internal conditions, but for the first time it was “confronting such a sharp crisis in the party and state, and standing before such a burning realization of the impasses that had been created.”<sup>15</sup>

Rakovsky noted that the Left Opposition had made a timely warning about the impending crisis, had precisely defined the stages of its development and had indicated ways to emerge from it. However, only when it faced a threat of famine, was the party leadership compelled to acknowledge the presence of a kulak danger, the monstrous development of bureaucratism and the decay of whole links in the chain of party, soviet and trade-union apparatuses. It had been forced to repeat what the Left Opposition had said: that reducing the tempo of industrialization would not remove the contradictions between the development of private capitalism in the countryside and the socialist sector in industry, but signify the reproduction of these contradictions on a widespread basis. But even after the harsh lessons of procurement disruptions, it continued stubbornly to deny its mistakes and, instead of honestly attempting to engage the party and working class in a discussion of its political line, “it had strengthened and intensified apparatus pressure, resorting openly to the assistance of the GPU.” By doing all this, it turned communists into “figures who had taken vows of silence, with permission to speak only to the extent that they repeated sophisms of the centrist leadership.”<sup>16</sup>

Rakovsky stressed that the “would-be Leninist general line of the party is reduced in practice to a helpless shift from right to left.” These shifts were expressed, on the one hand, in the raising of purchase prices for grain, which increased inflation and caused an additional surge of bank notes into the village, resulting in a new catastrophic breakdown in grain procurement. On the other hand, the application of emergency measures continued, reproducing the “worst sides of war communism.”<sup>17</sup> Administrative pressure bore down not only on the kulak, but also on the entire middle-peasant layers of the countryside, and partly on the poor peasants.

A critical analysis of Stalin’s policy and the development of an alternative program were continued in a “Declaration to the CC and CCC” by Rakovsky, V. Kosior and M. Okudzhava, dated 22 August 1929. Just by the middle of September, this declaration, written in Saratov exile, was signed by approximately 500 oppositionists located in ninety-five exile colonies and political isolators. Along with the “Declaration,” Rakovsky, Okudzhava and V. Kosior drew up theses on the situation in the party and country.

These documents insisted that the adoption of the first Five-Year Plan might be an important milestone in the development of socialist construction in the USSR. However, it would have to be fully borne in mind that the implementation of the first and subsequent Five-Year Plans would inevitably encounter serious objective difficulties. Industrialization and the socialist reconstruction of agriculture would demand enormous financial resources, part of which (for instance, appropriations for state farm construction until it became profitable) for a certain time would consist of a pure form

of state subsidies. Obtaining foreign equipment, without which the accelerated industrialization would be impossible, would require the maximum development of export, often at the expense of internal consumption. All this would require the growth of taxes, imposed on the working class and peasant masses, or an increase in state monetary emission, inevitably resulting in inflation. Both variants would lead to a growth in prices and the reduction of real wages. The results of the first year of the Five-Year Plan confirmed this prognosis when the tempos of raising the living standards of the workers foreseen by control figures were refuted by the growth of prices for items of prime necessity and by the increase in direct and indirect taxes.

The Declaration and the theses established the objective contradiction between two tasks: betterment of the material status of workers and peasants — a necessary condition for their active participation in socialist construction — and mobilization of enormous resources to meet the needs of industrial accumulation, which could only provide returns after several years. The authors saw mitigation of this contradiction in reform of the political system, aiming to reduce the enormously expensive costs of uncontrolled bureaucratic management. The first step of such reform would have to be a sharp reduction in expenditures to sustain the gigantic state and trade-union apparatuses, which would allow not only a healthier economic, but also a social and political condition in the country.

The Soviet constitution “provides for the working class and toiling masses rights which have never been known in any state form in history, except for the Paris Commune.”<sup>18</sup> However, these rights could become real only if the regime were elected, replaceable, and under constant control and free criticism by the masses. Only if the regime were organized in this way would it be possible to overcome the bureaucratism that had turned into a genuine national misfortune. Only then would it be possible to liquidate “the self-seeking mismanagement, which doubles and triples the costs of construction; the irresponsibility, petty tyranny and willfulness of the apparatuses, the flip side of which is the browbeaten and humiliated status of the toiling masses, who are deprived of their rights.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the documents of the Left Opposition called things by their real names in exposing the reasons for the political strangulation and economic disasters of the broad masses; these phenomena had an impact on all subsequent stages of the country’s development.

Considering that the prognosis made by the Left Opposition as early as 1923 had been justified in practice, Rakovsky, V. Kosior and Okudzhava stated that “the enemy had crawled in through the bureaucratic window.” The creation of a democratic system of management that Lenin had fought for was possible only if the Party “will be able to rein in the unbridled and tyrannical apparatus, abuses, mismanagement and the failures of which cost hundred and hundreds of millions of rubles.”<sup>20</sup>

The social base of bureaucratic centrism was the growing layer of functionaries (“managers”), the party and soviet bureaucracy,

“striving to be irremovable and hereditary. ... Instead of fighting against bureaucratism, centrism developed it into a system of management, transferred it from the soviet to the party apparatus, and gave to the latter forms and dimensions absolutely unheard of and absolutely unjustifiable given the role of political leadership that the party should play. Moreover, the centrist leadership elevated into communist dogma ... methods of command and compulsion, after refining and developing them to a level of bureaucratic virtuosity rarely achieved in history. It was precisely with the aid of these demoralizing methods, turning

thinking communists into machines destroying will, character and human dignity, that the centrist upper echelons managed to transform themselves into an irremovable and untouchable oligarchy replacing the class and party. ... Everyone was allowed to criticize himself, but the main and most responsible culprits not only did not criticize themselves, they could not even allow the party to criticize them. They were endowed with the divine attribute of infallibility.”<sup>21</sup>

A superficial reading of these words might suggest that they fully coincide with contemporary liberal criticism of bureaucratism and one-party rule. Historical truth, however, is always concrete. It is one thing to denounce the “apparatus” in a period when its final decay and helplessness are evident, when it has completely lost the trust of the masses. It is quite something else to offer such criticism in conditions when the apparatus possessed the ability to widely manipulate the party masses and the working class. It is one thing to deduce the rule of the bureaucracy from principles of the October Revolution, and quite another to see this rule as a grandiose bureaucratic reaction against the October Revolution.

Proceeding from a general characterization of bureaucratic centrism, the authors evaluated its relationship to the Right and Left Oppositions. Using the gigantic power concentrated in its hands, the Stalin group “drove the rightists from the VTsSPS and Comintern, and from soviet and party organizations, but only in order to replace the rightist sycophants with centrists.” At the same time it relentlessly increased the repression against the Left Opposition, “enriching its arsenal day after day with ever newer tools of compulsion. The most remarkable innovation in this regard, ... resurrecting clerical methods of the Middle Ages in the Soviet state, was using every conceivable means to force oppositionists of the communist party to renounce their communist views.”<sup>22</sup>

The authors stressed that the turn of the Stalin leadership to industrialization and collective-farm construction was being carried out by flawed apparatus-bureaucratic methods, under conditions when the independent initiative of the party and the toiling masses had been completely crushed. Meanwhile, the development of party and soviet democracy, as the Left Opposition had always insisted, was the touchstone of any genuinely left course in the economy. Insofar as economics and politics, as cause and effect, are always changing places in the historical process, preservation of the existing political regime could lead to a situation in which industrialization and collective-farm building would yield results that were contrary to those expected.

Developing positions contained in previous documents of the Left Opposition, the authors characterized the policy of the Stalin group as bureaucratic-centrist, the basic traits of which are: an arrogant and disdainful attitude toward workers, especially toward unskilled laborers and farm hands; a striving to present everything in a rosy color (everything is proceeding from good to even better); fear of real participation by the masses in political life. It is not difficult to see that all these characteristics applied fully not only to the Stalinist, but post-Stalinist leadership in the USSR.

The analysis by the Left Opposition of the social and political essence of bureaucratic centrism allows one to understand the reasons for the monstrous costs and deformations of socialist construction in the USSR over the following six decades. All further attempts to establish a “collective leadership” within the framework of the bureaucratic apparatus system inevitably ended in the creation of a regime of personal power, the emergence of an autocratic, authoritarian ruler who



mainly preserved fidelity to the bureaucratic-centrist political course. Both the totalitarian dictator Stalin, and the bustling reformer Khrushchev, and Brezhnev, who accepted no reforms, and Gorbachev, the loud advocate of “crucial transformations,” — all of them preserved as inviolable the bureaucratic deformations of planned economy and state property. All of them stubbornly obstructed genuinely democratic reforms of the political system of society and the inner life of the party.

The foundations of the bureaucratic-centrist political regime, which protected itself from any attempts to carry out socialist renewal, were laid in the struggle of the ruling factions against the Left Opposition. In 1929, the leaders of the latter were fully justified in stating that the degeneration of the political system of Soviet society had taken place: the replacement of proletarian dictatorship with a dictatorship of the bureaucratic apparatus.

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- [1.](#) D. A. Volkogonov, *Trotskii*, vol. II, M., 1992, p. 123.
  - [2.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1929, № 6, p. 25.
  - [3.](#) Private communication from Ivan Yakovlevich Vrachëv to the author of this book.
  - [4.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1991, № 6, p. 74.
  - [5.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 75.
  - [6.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 76.
  - [7.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin*, vol. II, M.: Terra, 1990, p. 267.
  - [8.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 262.
  - [9.](#) *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1990, № 4, p. 103; *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, № 7, p. 66.
  - [10.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1929, № 3–4, p. 5. [“Against Capitulation. A Wretched Document,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, p. 198].
  - [11.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1929, № 1–2, p. 22. [“Groupings in the Communist Opposition,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, pp. 84–85].
  - [12.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1929, № 3–4, pp. 6, 7 [“Against Capitulation. A Wretched Document,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, p. 200, 202–203].
  - [13.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 7 [*Ibid.*, pp. 203–204].
  - [14.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 14.
  - [15.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 12.
  - [16.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.
  - [17.](#) *Ibid.*
  - [18.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1929, № 6, p. 9.
  - [19.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 6.
  - [20.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1929, № 7, pp. 9–10.
  - [21.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 9–10.
  - [22.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 7.



# 14. From Emergency Measures to Forced Collectivization

Immediately after the Sixteenth Conference in April 1929, it became clear that all the previous measures adopted under pressure from the Bukharin group (raising the procurement prices for grain, increase in the commodities sent to the countryside, reduction of grain exports, and so forth) would not allow the upcoming grain procurement campaign to be conducted in a “peaceful manner.” Thus began an even more active return to emergency measures. In the first round of extraordinary measures the number of people convicted according to Article 107 amounted to less than 10,000 as a whole nationwide; during the grain harvest of 1928, 33,000 were put on trial in Ukraine alone, and in the Middle-Volga Region, 17,000 more.

At the same time, measures were adopted that were aimed at the “legal guarantee” of all forms of “pressure on the kulak.” Before this time, the standards used to designate households as kulak were rather arbitrary. In May 1929, therefore, the Sovnarkom of the USSR issued a decree specifically devoted to defining these parameters. Kulak households were considered to be those that had at least one of the following attributes: systematic use of hired labor; possession of a mill, creamery or other undertaking, or of complex machinery with a mechanical motor; systematic leasing of complex agricultural machinery or buildings; engaging in trade, usury, or acting as a commercial intermediary, or extraction of other income not derived from work. In June 1930, a special decree of the Central Executive Committee [TsIK] and Sovnarkom added other qualifiers: the presence of a manufacturing enterprise that was leased, and the leasing of land under conditions that were highly unfavorable for the lessee.

Every well-to-do peasant household engaging in commercial trade could be characterized by one of these traits. However, decrees of the Sovnarkom made possible an even wider interpretation of the concept of a “kulak farm,” insofar as they granted the right to republic sovnarkoms, as well as the *krai* and *oblast* executive committees, to introduce additional categories that would designate peasant farms as kulak. Farms that were recognized as kulak farms were assigned higher fixed quotas in yielding their grain surpluses. Village councils were granted the right to put on trial any “people with fixed quotas” [твердозаданцы] who had not fulfilled these quotas.

The increase in the tax squeeze on kulak farms (in 1928 they paid in individual taxes 10.8 percent of the entire sum of agricultural taxes, and in 1929, they were already paying 28 percent) was supplemented by a ban on admitting them into collective farms, granting them credit, and supplying them with manufactured goods; they were subject to forced buyouts of their tractors and other agricultural machinery, etc. All these measures caused a lowering of production on prosperous farms, leading to the sale of their herd and implements. Out of fear of repression, many well-to-do peasant families moved to cities or left for industrial construction sites.

According to the Central Statistical Administration, the share of kulak farms in the RSFSR shrank from 3.9 percent in 1927 to 2.2 percent in 1929; in Ukraine, the figure went from 3.8 percent to 1.4 percent. According to more precise calculations of modern historians, the total relative weight of these farms in the fall of 1929 amounted to 2.5–3 percent of the overall sum of peasant farms in the country, amounting to 500,000–600,000 households. Along with this, for 1928–1929 the portion of kulak farms measured by area sown fell to 6 percent, and by the gross production of grain to 4.4 percent.

Reduction in the number of kulak farms led to lower production of marketable grain, which was not compensated by kolkhoz [collective farm] production, since the number of kolkhozes remained relatively small. Despite the growth of state aid to the kolkhozes — in the form of credit, tax advantages, supply of farm machinery and implements, and transfer of the best land — the number of kolkhozes increased only from 14,800 in June 1928 to 57,000 in June 1929, and the relative weight of the peasant farms that were combined in them rose from 0.8 percent to 3.7 percent.

For this reason, the repressive measures applied to “pump out” the grain (searches; arrests; confiscation of grain reserves, livestock, buildings and other property) fell ever more frequently on the middle peasants in the countryside. In just three regions of Kazakhstan in 1928–1930, during the grain procurement campaigns, more than 34,000 people were sentenced and more than 22,000 subjected to administrative procedures. During these events, even according to official figures, kulaks made up slightly more than half of the peasants who were subjected to criminal and administrative repression.

As a result of the systematic application of extraordinary measures, the transfer of resources from the countryside to the cities began to occur on a highly significant scale. Trotsky noted that in 1929, when agriculture was the source of the existence of three-quarters of the country’s population, peasants received only one-eighth of the national income.<sup>1</sup>

The many violations of the law which accompanied the emergency measures — the closure of markets, the re-establishment of special detachments, and so forth — caused growing opposition from the peasants, up to the organization of armed resistance.

The sharpness of this resistance in the Don region can be seen from Sholokhov’s letter to E.G. Levitskaya,<sup>2</sup> a member of the party since 1903. Giving many examples of violence during grain procurements, Sholokhov writes in this letter on 18 July 1929:

“When you read brief and rosy accounts in the newspapers that the poor and middle peasants are putting the squeeze on the kulak, who then brings in his grain, what automatically comes to mind is a rather unflattering comparison! At one time, during the years of the civil war, the White newspapers wrote just as joyfully about ‘victories’ on all fronts, and about the close alliance with the ‘liberated cossacks’ ... You should have a look at what is going on with us in the neighboring Lower Volga region. The kulak is being squeezed, but the middle peasant has already been crushed. The poor peasants are starving; property, right down to samovars and rugs, is being sold in the Khopior region by true middle peasants, often even the poorest. The people are being brutalized, their mood is depressed, for next year the area sown will be much smaller.”

Sholokhov recalled that, during the civil war, when he participated in grain requisition campaigns, he “was a harsh commissar, and was tried by a revolutionary tribunal for exceeding his powers, but

even then you never heard of such ‘things’ that are being done now.” To confirm these words, the writer told of a meeting with a cossack who had volunteered to fight in the Red Army during the civil war and had served in it for six years:

“Everything he owned had been sold, right down to seed grain and chickens. They took his draft-cattle, clothing, and samovar, leaving only the walls of his home. He came to see me with two Red Army soldiers. In a telegram to Kalinin they openly said: ‘They ruined us worse than the Whites did in 1919.’ And in a conversation with me he smiled bitterly: ‘At least,’ he said, ‘they only took grain and horses, but now my own native authorities have taken every last thread.’”

Such methods of “grain procurements” led to the emergence of anti-Soviet bands, including those on horse numbering several dozens of sabers.

“1921 is coming back, and if matters follow this course much further, then by fall the *krai* will be flooded with these small flying detachments. There is a lot of flammable material. This can be seen by our authoritative organ that sent out a squadron to fight against banditry; what the hell is this, brothers? Are we finished? It’s 1929, and we have bands? This is horribly absurd and wild.”

In a following letter to Levitskaya on 31 July, Sholokhov recounted that “the GPU has been uprooting the Cossacks and is exiling them in bunches. By its (the GPU’s) grace, we have quiet and well-being.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1929, about 1,300 peasant uprisings were registered. The country faced the danger of a new civil war.

In these conditions, a current of “activists” arose among the “rightists” who demanded that their leaders shift from “empty declarations to more effective forms of struggle” to save the revolution and the country. According to A. Avtorkhanov, the “activists” proposed that the overthrow of Stalin’s leadership be accomplished by the method provided in the party’s statutes: to demand that the CC conduct a party referendum or convene an emergency party congress for a thorough discussion of its policy.<sup>4</sup> This idea, however, was rejected by leaders of the “rightists,” who, as before, took no measures to consolidate their supporters or even to circulate their programmatic documents that had been declared “secret” at the April plenum of 1929.

The “troika” silently endured all the new blows coming from Stalin, who successfully achieved their ever increasing submission and demoralization. When he learned that, in September 1929, Rykov had given a speech at a Moscow *oblast* congress of Soviets in which he omitted any ritual condemnation of the “right deviation,” Stalin sent a letter to Molotov, Voroshilov and Ordzhonikidze, in which he demanded that “Rykov be presented with an alternative: either distance himself openly and honestly from the rightists and conciliators, or be deprived of the right to speak in the name of the CC and Sovnarkom.”<sup>5</sup> A few days later, the Politburo passed a resolution accordingly, censuring Rykov.

Even more serious measures were taken with regard to Bukharin, who was removed from the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern by a decision of the Tenth Plenum of that body in July 1929. The plenum’s resolution, “On comrade Bukharin,” stated:

“even before the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, comrade Bukharin displayed differences with the general political line of the VKP(b) that had taken shape during the struggle by Bukharin and his co-thinkers against the policy of the

party in a particularly opportunistic platform, essentially the platform of a right deviation.”<sup>6</sup>

In the following months, while formally remaining a member of the Politburo, Bukharin practically did not participate in its work. In any case, his name is absent in the minutes of the Politburo sessions for the second half of 1929.

At the same time, provocations were undertaken to further compromise Bukharin and his disciples politically. In 1928, a special subdivision of the OGPU which surveilled Mensheviks and “Trotskyists” was also assigned the task of conducting secret work among the “rightists” (the program was code-named “Opponents”). One of the secret agents gathered followers of Bukharin at his dacha to discuss the situation in the party and nation. These and other conversations with the participation of several people were “presented” by the Chekists as “factional conferences.” Bukharin himself was visited by a Komsomol member named Platonov, who instigated a political discussion, notes of which were given to Stalin and sent by him to members of the Politburo. Aided by similar reports from secret agents, as well as fabricated documents from the GPU about sympathy for “the rightists” on the part of “wreckers” from the milieu of the scientific and technical intelligentsia, Stalin applied pressure on vacillating members of the Politburo such as Ordzhonikidze.

Stalin was especially persistent in conducting a campaign to banish his opponents from party scientific-research and educational institutions, where the best intellectual forces of the party were concentrated. It is not surprising that the majority of them were aligned with the “Trotskyists” or “rightists.” Having become convinced that their views on Stalin’s new economic policy and on the inner-party regime coincided, they began to establish contacts between each other. According to A. Avtorkhanov, such contacts began at the Institute of Red Professors [IKP] among a Trotskyist group headed by the philosopher Nikolai Karev and a group of “rightists” headed by a member of the CCC, Yan Sten. “Thus, what Bukharin was able to accomplish from above in conversation with Kamenev, the leaders of local groups easily accomplished from below.”<sup>7</sup> However, the activity of such groups was not widely developed, since the Stalinists, informed by many provocateurs about opposition moods in the IKP, Communist Academy, and other research and educational party centers, conducted unceasing purges there. About 10 percent of those who finished the IKP in 1927–1928 were expelled from the party for “active Trotskyist activity.” In wake of these expulsions, reprisals were shifted to “red professors” who had supported Bukharin. In January 1929, a special resolution of the CC was passed about the inner-party struggle in the IKP, after which people who had been members of the “Bukharin school” or who had sided with it were dismissed from this institute.

In the summer of 1929, the powerful propaganda machine was set into motion with ever greater force, spewing forth hundreds of books and pamphlets, and hundreds of articles directed against the “right deviation.” During this political and ideological campaign, the name of Yezhov appeared in the central press for the first time; he coauthored with Mekhlis and Pospelov an article, “The Right Deviation in Practical Work, and the Party Swamp.”<sup>8</sup>

Bukharin was subjected to criticism on the pages of *Pravda* for the first time on 21 August 1929, after which the entire party press began to call him “the leader and inspirer of right deviationists.”

Attempts by Bukharin's followers to soften the blows directed at him were labelled "factional forays." This, in particular, was the characterization given to an article by Aleksandr Slepko (who had been transferred by this time to work in the Samara Agricultural Institute). In it he spoke of his disagreement with the organizational measures taken against Bukharin and with the political motivation behind these measures. He noted that "the CC is casting aside its best people, and the leadership is deteriorating."<sup>9</sup> After this article, Slepko received a majority of votes at a party meeting. This incident was followed by a noisy campaign in the central press, resulting in Bukharin's declaration to his followers that they stop coming to his defense and that they "agree to call me however they like."<sup>10</sup>

In 1929, many of Bukharin's followers were subjected to party reprimands, removed from their posts, and transferred to work on the periphery. Some of them renounced their views in the party press.

All these undertakings served as the ideological preparation for the November Plenum of the Central Committee, which became the party forum that completed the political rout of the Bukharin group. The finale in preparing the plenum was Stalin's article, "Year of the Great Breakthrough," which stated that "the claims of the right opportunists (the Bukharin group) ... have collapsed and turned into dust, like old bourgeois-liberal rubbish." The article made assertions that took the party completely by surprise, that in the fall of 1929, a decisive breakthrough had occurred among the middle peasants in their attitude toward the kolkhozes. The peasants had supposedly joined the kolkhozes, "by whole villages, *volosts* and regions," and the rapid pace of development of the collective and state farms has left no doubt: "our country in some three years or so will become one of the most grain-abundant countries, if not the most grain-abundant country in the world."<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, at the time of these boastful assurances, only 7.6 percent of peasant farms had been collectivized, and the kolkhozes occupied altogether 3.6 percent of the sown area in the country.

The positions contained in Stalin's article were embedded in the decisions of the November plenum, which described the "gigantic" and "unprecedented" tempo of collectivization, exceeding "the most optimistic projections." The only confirmation of these rosy estimations were data showing that the relative weight of the collective farms, when it came to the entire marketable production of agriculture, had risen from 1.4 percent in 1927/28 to 4.9 percent in 1928/29.

The fact that, even among these kolkhozes, many were "on paper only," can be seen in several speeches from the plenum's participants. Thus, Kosior, the secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Ukraine noted:

"We have had instances when state farms were organized, but the peasants would lie down beneath the tractor and not allow the earth to be plowed ... We had some instances when whole villages joined the collective, but then they quickly fell to pieces, and they drove us away to the beat of the drum. We had complete collectivization over the territory of dozens of villages, and then it turned out that this was all inflated and artificially created, and the population did not participate in this and knew nothing about it."<sup>12</sup>

A letter was read at the plenum from Baranov, instructor at the Kolkhoz Center of the USSR, which detailed the methods used to carry out collectivization in the Khopior *okrug*. This region had been



declared the first to achieve complete collectivization. Baranov wrote:

“In places the directives of the *okrug* sometimes were interpreted to mean: ‘Whoever does not join the kolkhoz is an enemy of the Soviet regime’ ... There had been instances of broad promises to deliver tractors and credit: ‘They will give you everything, join the Kolkhoz...’”

Baranov warned that kolkhozes formed in this way would soon begin to fall apart. However, Stalin reacted to this letter with an angry retort: “What is it you want, to organize everything beforehand?”<sup>13</sup>

Under the influence of similar directives, the leaders of several *guberniia* and *krai* organizations began to make commitments to complete collectivization by the summer of 1931. However, even these deadlines were deemed insufficient. Molotov issued a directive that complete collectivization should basically be completed in the summer of 1930 in the Northern Caucasus, and by the fall of the same year in a number of other regions. “In today’s conditions,” he declared, “to hold discussions about a Five-Year Plan of collectivization means to engage in unnecessary activity. For most agricultural regions and *oblasts* ... we now need to think not about five years, but about the next year.”<sup>14</sup> Under the influence of this adventuristic edict, many leaders of local organizations returned from the plenum and announced a slogan of “furious tempos of collectivization.”

A resolution of the plenum, “On the Results and Further Tasks of Kolkhoz Construction,” declared a course “toward decisive struggle against the kulak, eradication of the roots of capitalism in agriculture, and the most rapid combination of individual poor- and middle-peasant farms into major collective farms.”<sup>15</sup> The plenum reviewed the control figures for 1929/30 that had been established merely six months before, and revised them toward a sharp increase in the tempos of collectivization. Within a year, the sown area of the kolkhozes was planned to be increased by 3.5 times, and the state farms, by almost two times. The result of this change would be

“to receive from the collectivized sector of the harvest in 1930 more than 50 percent of the marketable grain in trade outside the countryside (against 43 percent of the marketable grain projected by the Five-Year Plan for the harvest in 1933), which ... should signify the elimination of grain-producing difficulties and the basic resolution of the grain problem.”<sup>16</sup>

Stalin’s main task at the plenum was to achieve the complete capitulation of those members of the CC who, at the previous April plenum, had voted against the resolution denouncing the Bukharin group. The “troika” was thus condemned to complete isolation. This task became particularly urgent after the “troika” submitted a declaration to the plenum on 12 November.

This declaration showed that the “troika,” after silently absorbing all the attacks on them in the period between the two plenums, had decided to appeal to the Central Committee in protest against the unacceptable methods of struggle used against them. The authors of the statement not only did not acknowledge the “mistakes” attributed to them, but stressed that they could by no means agree with the characterization of their views in the press and did not consider themselves representatives of a “right deviation.” They indignantly wrote about the use of “unworthy jabs” and “exceedingly base insults” in the struggle against them. The declaration expressed particular resentment over the “shelling of comrade Bukharin over quotes from 1925.” The authors recalled that much softer

criticism by the Leningrad opposition of those same views expressed by Bukharin had been described by the majority of the Politburo, including Stalin, as “ludicrous slander ... formally against Bukharin but essentially against the CC.”

Recalling that Bukharin was “one of the initiators of the turn at the Fifteenth Congress of our party against the kulak,” the “troika” declared that it was in solidarity with the basic aspects of the “general line,” that it supported the high tempos of industrialization and collectivization (including the new control figures which the plenum was poised to accept) and that it was in favor of “a merciless struggle against the kulaks.”

The “troika” felt that their main disagreement with the majority of the Politburo and CC was over emergency measures. They claimed that by using the methods that they proposed at the April plenum “for carrying out the party’s general line, we could have achieved the desired results in a less painful way.” The declaration noted that the application of emergency measures had caused “a certain under-fulfillment of the plan in agriculture” and had pushed some of the middle peasants “over to the side of the ferociously resistant kulak.” The “troika” expressed certainty that the growth of kolkhozes and sovkhozes would make emergency measures superfluous in the next year, and in light of that, the disagreements between them and the majority of the Politburo “had lifted.” Not foreseeing the announcement of “complete collectivization,” they declared that “the question of the necessary growth of individual poor- and middle-peasant farms had still not disappeared.”<sup>17</sup>

Nadezhda Krupskaya considered that the declaration of 12 November was an enormous step by the “troika” toward meeting the positions of the majority of the CC. However, most of the speakers at the plenum, who demanded complete capitulation from the “rightists,” subjected the authors of the declaration to new ridicule. Thus, Iosif Vareikis stated that “the attempts of the Slepkovs, Aikhenvalds and people like them to save the theoretical banner of comrade Bukharin are pathetic and ludicrous.”

In the plenum’s short resolution “On the Group of Comrade Bukharin” (published, like all other “party documents” of the struggle against the Bukharinists, only in 1933), the declaration of the “troika” was characterized “as a factional document, as a factional maneuver of political bankrupts, analogous to the ‘retreating’ maneuvers of the Trotskyists, who often used their supposedly conciliatory statements as a method of preparing new attacks on the party.” The resolution indicated that Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy refused to acknowledge the erroneousness of their views contained in the platforms of 30 January and 9 February and condemned by the April 1929 plenum “as incompatible with the party’s general line.” The “troika’s” timid assertions about the negative consequences of the emergency measures were described in the resolution as “demagogic accusations” hurled at the party, and the preparation of a “new attack on the party and its CC.” Even such a restrained suggestion that, by accusing the “troika” of a right deviation, the April plenum had placed it “in an unequal position in the party and its leading organs,” was seen to be an inadmissible attempt by the authors “to counterpose themselves to the Politburo as an equal side, ‘freely’

negotiating with the party.” This was an indication of trying to “legalize the factional grouping of right deviationists, whom they were leading.”

Proceeding from all these points, the plenum resolved to remove Bukharin from membership in the Politburo “as the instigator and leader of right deviationists,” and warned Rykov and Tomsy, as well as Ugarov (the sole member of the CC who did not distance himself from the “troika” at the plenum), that in “case of the slightest attempt on their part to continue the struggle against the line and resolutions of the Executive Committee of the Comintern and Central Committee of the VKP(b), the party would not hesitate to apply the appropriate organizational measures to them.”<sup>18</sup> The only people voting against this resolution were Bukharin, Tomsy and Ugarov (Rykov did not vote).

The day after the plenum had ended, *Pravda* published statements by members of the CC and former leaders of the Moscow party organization, Uglanov, Kotov, Mikhailov and Kulikov, declaring their break from the position held by Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy. The “troika” perceived these statements, which they had absolutely not expected, as an “exaggeratedly hostile demonstration” against them.<sup>19</sup> The statement by Uglanov and Kulikov said that, having found themselves confronted with a choice: “to support comrades Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy, or to keep in step with the whole party,” they were choosing the latter, especially since “the past economic year and the results of the grain procurements have shown that we were mistaken.”<sup>20</sup>

Finding themselves completely isolated, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy issued a statement a week after the plenum had ended that was directly opposed in its spirit to what they had presented to the plenum. This statement, which was published in *Pravda*, said that for a year and a half they had disagreed with the majority of the CC on a number of political and tactical questions which they expressed in documents and speeches at plenums of the CC. It further stated:

“We consider it our duty to declare that the party and its CC were correct in this debate. Our views, expressed in certain documents, proved to be erroneous. In acknowledging these mistakes, we, on our part, will do everything possible to join the entire party to conduct a decisive struggle against all deviations from the party’s general line and, most of all, against the right deviation and any compromise with it.”<sup>21</sup>

Ugarov simultaneously published a statement that he had come to the conclusion that he was mistaken in supporting the Bukharin “troika” at the two last plenums of the CC.

This capitulation of the “rightists” signified the completion of a seven-year process of liquidating the collective leadership in the party that brought together independently thinking people in the Politburo. From now on, political discussions became impossible, even on the level of the highest party leadership.

Having achieved the capitulation of all opposition elements in the Central Committee, Stalin delivered a speech, “On Questions of Agrarian Policy in the USSR,” on 27 December 1929 at a conference of Marxist agronomists. In it he made several important “additions” to resolutions of the November plenum. First of all, he demanded “the establishment in the countryside of large socialist farms in the form of sovkhoses and kolkhoses,” which directly prompted party leaders to force the peasants into kolkhoses. Secondly, for the first time he advanced the slogan of shifting “from a policy

of limiting the exploitative tendencies of the kulaks to a policy of liquidating the kulaks as a class.” He explained this slogan with the term “dekulakization,” which he had declared to be inadmissible during all preceding years. Thirdly, he issued a far-going warning: when NEP “ceases to serve the cause of socialism, we will send it to the devil.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, Stalin’s speech heralded a new and sharp reorientation of policy toward economic adventurism.

In order to provide a theoretical basis for the new slogans, Stalin sharply changed his opinions about the prospects of developing individual peasant farms. In May 1928, he had asserted that if reasonable organizational and agro-technical measures were undertaken, it would be possible in three to four years to raise the productivity of small and medium individual peasant farms by 15–20 percent, and to receive from them no less than an additional 100 million poods of marketable grain.<sup>23</sup> In November of the same year he expressed certainty that it would be possible to raise the tempo of developing agriculture, in particular, by “raising the productivity and enlarging the area sown by individual poor- and middle-peasant farms.”<sup>24</sup> And in the report at the conference of agrarian Marxists, he declared that “our small-peasant farms not only do not as a whole achieve an annual expanded reproduction, but, on the contrary, they very rarely are able to achieve even simple reproduction.”<sup>25</sup> Stalin needed this claim in order to declare that “complete collectivization” was the only way to guarantee growth of agricultural production.



*Товарищ Н.В.Сталин в день своего 50-летия среди своих соратников. Слева направо: товарищи Г.К.Орджоникидзе, К.Е.Ворошилов, В.В.Куйбышев, Н.В.Сталин, М.И.Калинин, Л.М.Каганович, С.М.Киров. (1929г.)*

*Ordzhonikidze, Voroshilov, Kuibyshev, Stalin, Kalinin, Kaganovich and Kirov at Stalin’s fiftieth birthday celebration in 1929.*

Stalin’s declaration of the slogan of complete collectivization and the liquidation of the kulaks as a class coincided in time with the loud propaganda campaign on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday.



Earlier, such jubilee campaigns had not been undertaken. Now, however, all the party leaders published articles containing unrestrained panegyrics to Stalin. In these articles, the customary party lexicon was changed for the first time: the traditional concept of “party leaders” was crowded out by glorification of a single leader, “who headed the communist movement of the entire world.” In order to reinforce the Stalin cult, his comrades-in-arms resorted to unprecedented falsification of party history. The greeting of the CC and CCC to Stalin said:

“The best Leninist, the oldest member of the Central Committee and its Politburo, ... of Lenin’s immediate pupils and comrades-in-arms, you proved to be the most steadfast and consistent Leninist. Not once in the course of your entire activity did you retreat from Lenin, either in your theoretical positions of principle, or in your entire practical work.”<sup>26</sup>

The idea that there was not a single instance when Stalin differed in his views from Lenin was aggressively repeated in various forms in all the articles by party leaders that appeared in the pages of the jubilee edition of *Pravda* and then were collected in a separate anthology. The articles by Kalinin, “Helmsman of Bolshevism”; Ordzhonikidze, “Immovable Bolshevik”; Kaganovich, “Stalin and the Party”; Mikoyan, “Steel Soldier of the Bolshevik Party”, and many others seemed to compete with each other in adulation and obsequiousness. But even among these articles, where Stalin for the first time was being called “dear leader,” “brilliant theoretician” and so forth, an article by Voroshilov stood out for its unprecedented falsification: “Stalin and the Red Army” (which later grew into a book). This work was the first to present Stalin as the creator of all the victories in the civil war. According to Voroshilov, Stalin was “the only person whom the Central Committee sent from one front to another, choosing places that were the most dangerous and most threatening for the revolution.”<sup>27</sup>

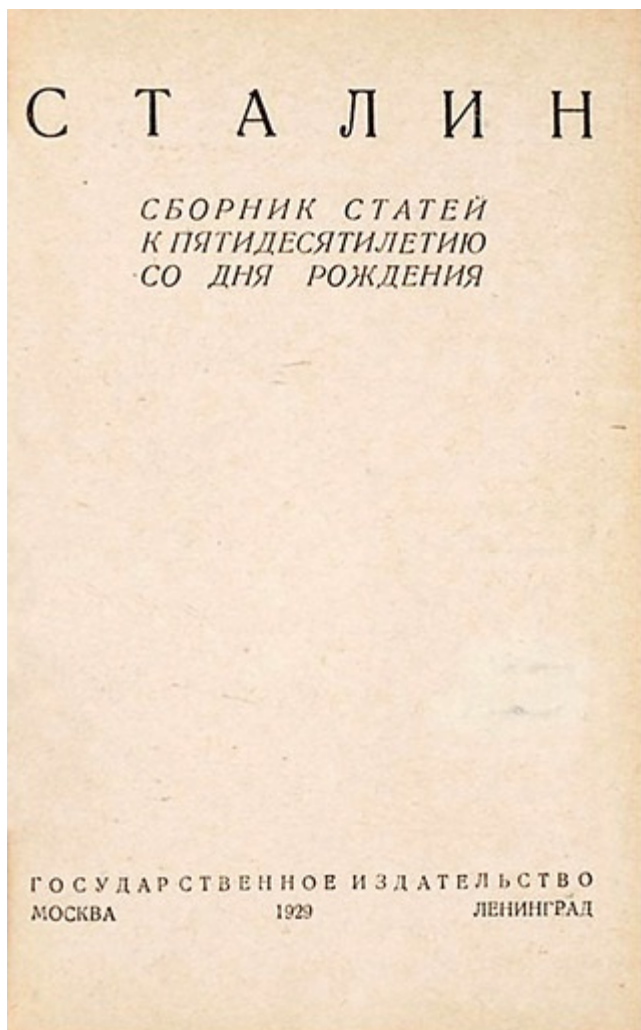
Following these articles, Stalin was showered with thousands of greetings from the “masses,” prepared by obliging local apparatchiks. As the “Riutin Platform” later stressed, “for any Bolshevik who had still not lost all shame or forgotten old party traditions, this entire comedy of a ‘coronation’ evoked a feeling of revulsion and shame for the party.”<sup>28</sup>

Having surrounded himself with the kind of people who could be counted on to carry out the most adventurous actions, Stalin opened a new chapter in the history of the party and the country, officially known as “the offensive of socialism along the entire front.”

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1. L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin*, vol. II, p. 277.
  2. Through one of the secretaries of the party’s Moscow Committee, Levitskaya passed on to Stalin a copy of this letter without the last, and much sharper, paragraph: “Artëm (the writer Artëm Vesëly - *V. R.*) is right in saying: ‘They should be put through a fine sieve...’ I also endorse this: all of them, right up to Kalinin, should be sorted out with a fine mesh; all who hypocritically, like a bunch of philistines, cry out about an alliance with the middle peasant yet, at the same time, crush this same middle-peasant” (*Znamya*, 1987, № 10, pp. 181, 183).
  3. *Dokumenty svidetel’stvuiut. Iz istorii derevni nakanune i v khode kollektivizatsii* [Documents Bear Witness. From the History of the Countryside on the Eve of and the Course of Collectivization], M., 1989, pp. 233–234.
  4. A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiia vlasti*, p. 182.
  5. *Kommunist*, 1990, № 11, p. 102.



- [6.](#) *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional v dokumentakh*, p. 911.
- [7.](#) A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiia vlasti*, p. 116.
- [8.](#) *Bol'shevik*, 1929, № 16.
- [9.](#) *Pravda*, 20 October 1929.
- [10.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1992, № 2–3, pp. 31–32.
- [11.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 130, 132 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, pp. 137–138].
- [12.](#) *Dokumenty svidetel'stvuiut*, pp. 288–289.
- [13.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 264, 289–290.
- [14.](#) V. M. Molotov, “O kolkhoznom dvizhenii,” *Bol'shevik*, 1929, № 22, p. 12.
- [15.](#) *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniiakh*, vol. 5, p. 31.
- [16.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- [17.](#) *Dokumenty svidetel'stvuiut*, pp. 274–282.
- [18.](#) *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh*, vol. 5, pp. 48–49.
- [19.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1992, № 2–3 p. 22.
- [20.](#) *Pravda*, 18 November 1929.
- [21.](#) *Pravda*, 26 November 1929.
- [22.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 149, 169, 171 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, pp. 155, 176, 178].
- [23.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, pp. 91–92 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, pp. 95].
- [24.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 262 [*Ibid.*, p. 272].
- [25.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, p. 145 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, p. 151].
- [26.](#) Stalin. *Sbornik statei k piatidesiatiletiu so dnia rozhdeniia*, M.-L., 1930, p. 9.
- [27.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- [28.](#) *Reabilitatsiia. Politicheskie protsessy 30–50-kh godov*, M., 1991, p. 33.



*Stalin. Collection of Articles on His Fiftieth Birthday, 1929.*



*Voroshilov's Stalin and the Red Army, 1933.*



*A pin commemorating Stalin's fiftieth birthday.*

# 15. The First Round of Collectivization

After the November 1929 plenum, Stalin did not convene a new plenum of the Central Committee for eight months. The first round of complete collectivization, with its adventuristic beginning and shameful ending, unfolded over the course of this period. All the documents concerning this large-scale political campaign were developed and adopted by a narrow group of apparatchiks without confirmation by the full Central Committee.

The draft of the first of these documents, prepared by a commission of the Politburo led by the People's Commissar of Agriculture Yakovlev, noted that "it is hopeless to try to solve the 'kulak problem' by resettling the entire mass of the kulak population in distant regions or by measures of a similar kind."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the commission felt that it was possible to accept some of the kulaks into the collective farms.

The commission proposed to complete collectivization of the majority of peasant farms in the main grain producing regions within two to three years; in the grain consuming regions, within three to four years; and in the economically backward national republics, in the second Five-Year Plan. According to this project, all that was subject to collectivization would be the basic means of production while preserving the private property of peasant families when it came to petty inventory, cows and small livestock serving the consumption needs of the family. However, Stalin introduced substantial amendments to these relatively "moderate" deadlines and methods of collectivization. The first directives sent to the localities were shaped by these amendments. Thus, the directive of the Collective Farm Center from 10 December 1929 proposed that in regions of complete collectivization, the collectivizing of working livestock and cows should reach 100 percent; pigs — 80 percent; and sheep — 60 percent.

A Central Committee decree adopted on 5 January 1930, "On the Tempo of Collectivization and Measures of State Aid to Kolkhoz Construction," indicated that in regions of the Northern Caucasus, Lower Volga and Middle Volga, collectivization could be "basically finished by the fall of 1930 or, in any case, in the spring of 1931"; in other grain-producing regions, "in the fall of 1931 or, in any case, in the spring of 1932." Already by the spring of 1930, the area sown being cultivated by the kolkhozes and sovkhoses should have significantly exceeded the figures established in the Five-Year Plan for 1933. The decree demanded that a determined struggle be waged "against any attempts to restrain the development of the collective movement because of a shortage of tractors and complex machinery."<sup>2</sup>

The decree of the CC from 5 January began a series of abundant directives aimed at forced collectivization and dekulakization. A lead article in *Pravda*, under the headline "Liquidation of the Kulaks as a Class is on the Agenda," called for "a declaration of war to the death against the kulak, and to finally wipe him from the face of the earth."<sup>3</sup> This line led to resolutions developed by a commission of the Politburo formed on 15 January under the leadership of Molotov: the CC directive from 30 January "On Measures for Liquidating Kulak Farms in the Regions of Complete



Collectivization,” the directives of the TsIK and Sovnarkom from 1 February “On Measures Strengthening the Socialist Reconstruction of Agriculture in Regions of Complete Collectivization and Fighting against the Kulaks,” and “On the Prohibition of Unauthorized Resettlement of Kulak Households and the Sale of Property by Them.” These resolutions rescinded, in the regions of complete collectivization, the operation of laws concerning the leasing of land and the utilization of hired labor. Harsh repressive measures were stipulated for the unauthorized resettlement of kulak farms and for the sale of their property.

Local authorities were granted extraordinary powers “up to full confiscation of kulak property and their expulsion from various regions (both *krai* and *oblast*).”<sup>4</sup> The methods of dekulakization and deportation were concretized in secret instructions from the TsIK and Sovnarkom from 4 February and in an order from the OGPU on 2 February. These documents ordered, in regions of complete collectivization, the confiscation of the kulaks’ means of production; livestock; farming and living structures; production and trade facilities; produce, food and seed supplies; cash on hand and “excesses of domestic property.” This was the actual content of the dekulakization that was planned on average for three to five percent of the peasant farms.

The kulaks subject to more severe repression were divided into three categories. The first category included “counter-revolutionary kulak activists,” particularly cadres of active insurgent organizations who faced imprisonment in concentration camps or execution according to sentences passed by “troikas.” The “removal of the first category,” which was supposed to be completed by the beginning of the unfolding campaign to deport kulaks, was supposed to be applied to 50,000–60,000 people. The families of people sent to camps or sentenced to the death penalty were to be exiled to distant regions of the country together with families of “the second category,” which included “major kulaks and former semi-landlords, actively opposing collectivization,” “local kulak authorities and the entire kulak cadre from whom the counter-revolutionary groups were formed.” From only Ukraine, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Siberia, the Urals, the Northern Caucasus, the regions of the Middle and Lower Volga, and the Central Black-Earth Region, the plan intended to exile 210,000 families. The remaining kulaks were to be exiled to villages outside the boundaries of the collective farms in regions where they resided.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout January and February 1930, Stalin relentlessly spurred on the collectivizing frenzy. In the article, “On the Question of the Policy of Liquidating the Kulaks as a Class,” published on 21 January in *Red Star*, he openly declared a complete break of present party policy with decisions of the Fifteenth Congress and Sixteenth Conference. Noting that, since the summer of 1929, there had been a “*turn* in the policy of our party in the countryside,” Stalin stressed that the Fifteenth Congress in 1927 had proceeded from the fact that

“the kulaks, as a class, nevertheless should remain for some time. On this basis, the Fifteenth Congress left in force the law about leasing land, knowing full well that those leasing the land were mainly kulaks. On this basis the Fifteenth Congress left in force the law about hired labor in the village, demanding that it be carried out precisely. On this basis, the impermissibility of dekulakization was proclaimed one more time ... Do these laws and these directives contradict the policy of liquidating the kulaks, as a class? Yes, without any question. Which means, these laws and these directives must now be set aside in regions



of complete collectivization, the sphere of which is now growing not by days, but by the hour. By the way, they have already been set aside by the very course of the kolkhoz movement in regions of complete collectivization.”

In this way, Stalin declared in one stroke the abrogation of all party resolutions and Soviet laws determining policy in the countryside. This cancellation, to use his words, was supposedly caused by the pressure of the spontaneous movement of poor and middle peasants, “who were smashing the kulaks and carrying out complete collectivization.”<sup>6</sup>

In a lead article in *Pravda* written on Stalin’s direct order, the bar of the tempos of collectivization was raised even higher in comparison with recent official decisions. The article said that “the recent draft calling for collectivization of 75 percent of poor- and middle-peasant farms in 1930–31 is not a maximal plan.”<sup>7</sup>

In “A Reply to Students at Sverdlov University,” published on 10 February in *Pravda*, Stalin demanded a fight against the “self-liquidation” of kulak farms and the “squandering” of their own property, which masked the last path to salvation for well-to-do peasant families trying to avoid the reprisals hanging over them.<sup>8</sup> Another demand by Stalin focused on forced collectivization in regions where, according to previous resolutions, “complete collectivization” was not supposed to take place.



*Peasant agricultural laborers being urged to join the collective farms, 1930. See poster on next pages.*

In conditions of incessant collectivizing leaps, neither the peasants, nor the local party officials were able to understand what the Stalin leadership was trying to obtain from them. Many provincial organizations carried out decisions about finishing collectivization in the course of the spring sowing

campaign of 1930. Even in Central Asia, where the Central Committee demanded the overall completion of collectivization in the spring of 1932 (and in the nomad or semi-nomadic regions even later), local leaders issued the slogan: “Catch up to and surpass the advanced regions in tempos of collectivization!”

Collectivization and dekulakization were perceived in the localities as an all-out campaign which had to be reported as completed as quickly as possible. The activity of the local apparatus was evaluated exclusively according to the percentage of collectivized farms. Party committees in the regions and *okrugs* competed with each other in issuing victorious communiqués from the “kolkhoz front.” In this collectivizing fervor, there were frequent instances of the maximum socialization of the property of peasant farms, right down to a solitary cow, small livestock and poultry.

Insofar as the state lacked the material resources for providing what was necessary for the kolkhozes that had been created, the confiscated property of the kulak households was handed over to the collective farms as non-distributable assets. Non-productive personal property of those who had been dekulakized was distributed among the poor peasants, which contributed to fomenting the basest instincts in this milieu. Well-to-do middle peasants were included among lists designated for dekulakization.



*“Away with the kulak from the kolkhoz,” 1930.*

The collectivization fever that had seized the entire country can be seen in official figures indicating that by the beginning of January 1930, more than 20 percent of peasant farms had joined the kolkhozes; by the beginning of March, this figure reached more than 50 percent.



To the extent that the turn to complete collectivization proceeded literally in a few days, without any kind of organizational and ideological preparation, and under the pressure of contradictory and panicked orders, it bore a spontaneous and elemental character. In practice, it developed into violence against the broad masses of the peasantry. The peasants responded in three basic ways.

The first way was an appeal to the authorities, from whom the peasants sought defense from the administrative tyranny and capriciousness that was being unleashed in the localities. During just the fall and winter of 1929–1930, more than 90,000 complaints were sent to Stalin and Kalinin; the overwhelming majority of them, of course, remained unanswered.



*"Join the kolkhoz," 1930.*

*Poster urging peasants to join the collective farm, with all their livestock.*

*"Don't slaughter or sell your herd."*

*The kulak in the lower right, "harms both workers and peasants by slaughtering and selling off his herd."*

The second response was the mass slaughter of livestock which had been designated to be given to the kolkhozes. In order to stop this practice, in January 1930, two decrees of the TsIK and Sovnarkom

were adopted: “On Measures of Struggle against the Rapacious Slaughter of Livestock,” and “On the Prohibition of the Slaughter of Horses and about Responsibility for the Illegal Slaughter and Predatory Exploitation of Horses.” According to these decrees, and a decree by the TsIK and Sovnarkom from 1 November 1930 “On Measures against the Rapacious Slaughter of Livestock,” slaughter in kulak households was punished by complete or partial confiscation of livestock and farm inventory, and imprisonment up to two years. In poor-peasant and middle-peasant households, a fine was set equal to ten times the value of the animal killed. The same fine was applied to kolkhozes, where, due to the lack of collective stock-breeding facilities, feed, skill at caring for the collectivized herd, and so forth, they often killed the livestock weakened by poor care that had been gathered from peasant farmsteads and added to the common herd.

Finally, the third way chosen by desperate peasants in reaction to the massive violence was anti-kolkhoz armed resistance. Their character and scale can be seen from data provided in the 1932 “Riutin platform”: at the beginning of 1930, there were more than 500 major uprisings in the country, each with thousands of participants; in many instances, communists and Komsomol members participated in these rebellions, and at times they were led by members of the party. In one case, even the regional leader of the GPU led the uprising.<sup>9</sup>



*“Let us destroy the kulak as a class,” 1930.*

According to data from modern Soviet historians, in January-March of 1930, there were no less than 2,200 mass insurgencies with the participation of almost 800,000 peasants. The number of individual and group reprisals against the organizers of collectivization and against collective-farm activists was much higher.

All this meant that the country had virtually entered into a new civil war. As a secret letter from the Central Committee acknowledged on 2 April 1930, if the process of violent collectivization (called a “distortion of the party line”) had not been stopped, “a good half of our ‘lower level’ officials would have been killed by the peasants” in a broad wave of insurgent activity.<sup>10</sup>

1. *Neizvestnaia Rossiia, XX vek* [Unknown Russia. *The Twentieth Century*], M., 1992, p. 187.

2. *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh*, vol. 5, p. 73, 75.

3. *Pravda*, 11 January 1930.

4. *Istoriia SSSR*, 1990, № 5, pp. 23–24.

5. *Neizvestnaia Rossiia, XX vek*, pp. 238–241.



[6.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 181–183 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, pp. 187–189].

[7.](#) *Pravda*, 3 February 1930.

[8.](#) Nevertheless, of the 400,000–450,000 families of the “third category,” 200,000–250,000 families in just 1929–1930 “dekulakized themselves,” i.e., they abandoned or sold off their property and fled from the villages to construction sites and to cities. The flight of peasant families to the cities out of fear of dekulakization and deportation continued in subsequent years.

[9.](#) *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 345.

[10.](#) *Dokumenty svidetel'stvuiut*, p. 390.

# 16. The Left Opposition on Collectivization

Several journal articles and works of fiction published at the end of the 1980s claimed that complete collectivization and dekulakization occurred because of the way Stalin perceived and then carried out the ideas of the Left Opposition. While exposing the fantastic nature of this version, several serious researchers nevertheless declared that “unfortunately, no one at that time proposed other, more acceptable alternatives which would have provided a real possibility of speeding up industrialization without coming into conflict with the peasantry...”<sup>1</sup>

If applied to persons who belonged to the party leadership at that time, such an assessment is entirely correct. It applies even to Bukharin, who at the very height of the race to collectivize, adopted the mission of theoretically justifying “a new conception of collectivization.” In the article, “Great Reconstruction (On the Current Period of Proletarian Revolution in our Country),” published in February 1930 in *Pravda*, he evaluated the “sharp turn” taking place in the country as a special form of intraformational leap, for which the party was not prepared theoretically. Still valuing his reputation as a theoretician, Bukharin attempted to correct this “gap” in theory by explaining that the process of transferring agriculture to a socialist path occurs not “according to ‘classical’ formulas of pedants: *first*, hundreds of thousands of tractors, *then* the remaking of peasant farms in a collective way ... A more appropriate formula: *first* the remaking of productive relations, *then* the technological revolution.” Making a 180-degree shift, Bukharin wrote that the peculiarity of the sharp turn that the country was going through consists in the fact that it was bound up “with an extreme intensification of the class struggle ... Economics, politics, science, art, religion, philosophy, everyday life, school — everywhere the contradictions of social forces had built up, everywhere the dividing line between the old and new world had become much sharper ... But the most desperate struggle is being fought in the countryside. Here the *anti-kulak revolution* is rapidly and victoriously developing; we must above all analyze its social and economic meaning.” The results of this analysis came down to the assertion that the kulaks were offering “furious resistance to socialist construction,” and therefore, “we must talk to them in the language of lead.”<sup>2</sup>

In order to justify the destructive processes that were occurring in the countryside (the mass slaughter of livestock by the peasants, etc.), Bukharin offered the abstract and scholastic thesis that the break-up of old social relations always results in the fall of productive forces.

Thus, although right up until the end of 1929 Bukharin had opposed extraordinary measures, at the beginning of 1930 he supported the most dreadful and dangerous policy in the village. In comparison to this policy, as Stalin would later note, the emergency measures were “a plaything.”<sup>3</sup> That’s how the “Bukharin alternative” changed at the most critical moment of the party’s “spat” with the countryside.

In explaining the sudden transition to a “revolution from above,” which for many preceding years he had said was inadmissible, Bukharin declared that “we have entered” into the new phase ...

“through the gates of emergency measures and the rapidly developing crisis of grain production.” This new phase, according to Bukharin, “had not been foreseen in all concretenesses.”<sup>4</sup>

Trotsky criticized these arguments by Bukharin with particular sarcasm. In comparing the control figures of the Five-Year Plan adopted in April 1929 (the collectivization of one-fifth of the peasants in the course of 1929–1933), with the results of the collectivizing race for March 1930 (the collectivization of three-fifths of peasant farms), he wrote:

“Even if we accept in good faith that this scale of collectivization is a complete triumph of socialism, then we must simultaneously recognize the full bankruptcy of the leadership, for planned economy assumes that the leadership foresees, at least to some degree, the basic economic processes. Meanwhile, there is not even a hint of this. Bukharin, the new, reconstructed, industrialized and completely collectivized Bukharin, acknowledges in *Pravda* that this new stage of collectivization arose out of administrative measures in the struggle for grain, and that this stage had not been foreseen ‘in all its concretenesses.’ That is not too badly said! The error of the tempo in planning calculations reached a figure of about 900–1000 percent. And in what area? Not in the question of thimble production, but in the question of the socialist transformation of the entirety of agriculture. It is clear that Stalin and Yaroslavsky did not indeed foresee a few of the ‘concretenesses.’ Here Bukharin is correct.”<sup>5</sup>

Among the “concretenesses” unforeseen by Stalin’s leadership, Trotsky pointed primarily to the unwillingness of the majority of the peasantry to enter the kolkhozes. “We never, as everyone knows, suspected the present leadership of having an overabundance of insight,” he wrote. “But it never would have made such a mistake, if collectivization had truly grown out of the peasants’ belief, won on the basis of experience, in the advantages of large-scale collective agriculture over individual farms.”<sup>6</sup>

Trotsky recalled that the Left Opposition had always pointed to two basic factors determining the practical possibilities and limits of collectivization: the presence of productive-technological resources for large-scale farming and the subjective readiness of the peasantry to shift to collective farming, determined in the final analysis by the same productive-technological factors. Only the profitability for them of collective farming, based on high technology, could draw the peasants into the kolkhozes. From these positions Trotsky mocked the “theory” invented by the Stalinists to justify the “mistake in tempo by 1000 percent,” namely, the theory that

“technology is a tenth-rate matter, and that socialist agriculture (‘the manufacturing kind’) can, as one crosses oneself, be constructed on any means of production. We, however, firmly reject this mystical theory. ... Moreover, we declare a ruthless war against this mythology, for the inevitable disillusionment of the peasants threatens to cause a severe reaction against socialism in general.”<sup>7</sup>



*“We collective farmers, on the basis of complete collectivization, are liquidating the kulaks as a class.”*

The February-March and April 1930 issues of the *Bulletin of the Opposition* published the first responses to complete collectivization and dekulakization. Let us examine a few excerpts from these letters, which show that the “undisarmed” oppositionists who maintained contact with Trotsky strongly rejected this policy from the very beginning; they considered it the most vulgar break from the principles of socialist construction. “The administrative ‘introduction’ of socialism in the countryside on the basis of ‘horse-drawn power,’ must be definitely brought to a close ... The slogan of ‘dekulakization’ ... must be condemned as adventuristic.” “The causes of the new ultra-adventuristic flight of centrism are rooted precisely in a rift with the middle peasant. Instead of looking straight into the eyes of this reality, the centrists think that ‘collectivization,’ scholastically created in theory and administratively introduced in practice, will remove from the agenda the fundamental question of correct class relations in the village.”<sup>8</sup> “Whatever we have been saying about the destructiveness of today’s putschist policy of centrism, has been completely justified.” “I am for abolishing this ‘complete’ monstrosity — that is to say, complete collectivization aided by prosecutorial ‘clarifications’; I am against the ‘eradication of the roots of capitalism’ on horse-drawn power, on the basis of the enthusiasm shown by agents of the GPU; I am against the ‘switching’ of small-scale farming onto ‘socialist rails’ in the course of one to two years.” “What is now taking place would more accurately be called an attempt at militarizing peasant labor.”<sup>9</sup>

A comprehensive analysis of the first stage of collectivization is contained in Trotsky’s article “Economic Adventurism and its Dangers,” written on 13 February 1930. He stresses that the course



toward complete collectivization and dekulakization “is by no means a less acute, and in several aspects a more acute, danger than yesterday’s course.”

Trotsky recalled that in 1925–1927, the Left Opposition proposed a different and constructive way — a more decisive tax on the upper layers of the peasantry aimed at reducing the differentiation in the countryside and accelerating industrialization. In response to this proposal, the ruling faction denied the presence of kulak accumulation and accused the opposition of trying “to rob the peasantry.”

“Meanwhile the kulak grew into a serious force, drew the middle peasant after itself and subjected industry and cities to a hunger blockade ... The bureaucracy was forced to sharply change its policy. A crusade was launched against the kulak. The measures which the opposition had proposed earlier, in order to limit the exploitative tendencies, were immediately surpassed when the struggle against the kulak for grain commenced.”<sup>[10](#)</sup>

Insofar as the kulak was not separated from the middle peasant by some impenetrable barrier, the uncoordinated administrative blows rained down not only on the kulak, but on the middle peasant as well. The sharp and panic-stricken reversal of policy in the village led to an almost total liquidation of NEP, i.e., of the market, without which the peasant, as a small-scale producer, cannot exist. Insofar as the gates of the market were locked, the peasants, and most of all their upper layers, who had been oriented for several years of “liberal” Stalin-Ustrialov policy toward a capitalist-farmer line, suddenly were driven into a blind alley. The peasants, who after the whole experience of revolution are not easily inclined to take the path of civil war for the market, began to scurry about in search of other ways and “rushed into the only open gates — of collectivization.”<sup>[11](#)</sup>

When Trotsky was writing this article, he did not possess sufficient information about the scale of the violence against the peasants or the scale of the reciprocal anti-kolkhoz actions of the peasant masses (all this information was carefully concealed). Nevertheless, he strongly rejected illusions that Stalin, having driven the majority of the peasants into kolkhozes within a few months, had accomplished a decisive victory over the peasantry. Trotsky emphasized that forced collectivization, as a crude empirical attempt to be rescued from the consequences of policy from 1923–1927, had assumed the epidemic character of desperate measures and appeared before the peasantry primarily as a form of expropriating all their property. Therefore, there were no measures, even the harshest, that were capable of preventing a social explosion in the countryside. Trotsky considered the first harbinger and expression of this inevitable explosion to be the mass slaughter of livestock by the peasants, leading to the exhaustion of productive forces in agriculture.

In explaining the alternative strategy to “complete collectivization” proposed by the Left Opposition in the 1920s, Trotsky wrote that it assumed the realization of collectivization, and the mechanization of agriculture closely associated with it, by planned and rational methods, corresponding to the material resources and possibilities of the country. Given these conditions, it would be possible to achieve, within ten to fifteen years, the transformation of the material and technological conditions of agriculture, thereby creating the productive base of collectivization. In contrast to this strategy, the Stalin leadership forced tempos of collectivization that the country could not meet, and that it decided to secure exclusively through administrative pressure on the peasantry. Such an approach was fraught with enormous dangers, which would inevitably reveal themselves in

the very near future. These dangers originated primarily from ignoring the material, productive and technological factors — the close interrelationship between industrialization and collectivization.

“From the peasants’ wooden ploughs and old nags, even if they are bound together, one cannot create large-scale agriculture, just as one cannot make a steamship out of the sum of fishermen’s rowboats tied together.”<sup>12</sup>

Insofar as socialist collectivization of agriculture can only be the result of its mechanization, then the attainable scale of collectivization is determined by the general volume of the country’s industrialization. Even given the successful fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan, industry could, by the end of the Five-Year Plan, guarantee tractors and other agricultural machinery for only 20 to 25 percent of peasant farms.

“These are the real limits of collectivization. As long as the USSR remains isolated, the industrialization (mechanization, electrification and so forth) of agriculture can be conceived only within the perspective of a consecutive series of Five-Year Plans.”<sup>13</sup>

However, in the politics of the Stalin leadership, the processes of industrialization and collectivization were completely severed from each other. Regardless of how rapidly the development of Soviet industry proceeded, it remained, and would long remain, extremely backward. The high tempos of the growth of industry were measured in relation to an extremely low starting point. Proceeding from these premises, Trotsky sharply criticized Molotov, who had explained the necessity of complete collectivization from the slower tempo of the development of agriculture in comparison with industry. Calling such a juxtaposition of tempos economic illiteracy, Trotsky indicated that the rupture between the tempos of development of state industry and individual farming was conditioned by the fact that industry was too weak to raise agriculture to the necessary technological level. Collectivization could lead to the growth of production in agriculture only if its tempos were in agreement with the tempos of a technological revolution in farming. In turn,

“the tempo of such a revolution is limited by today’s relative weight of industry. The tempo of collectivization must be coordinated with the material resources of the latter, by no means with its abstract statistical tempo.”<sup>14</sup>

Stressing that the Stalinist bureaucracy, after several years of opportunist policy, was experiencing a period of “the acute frenzy of ultra-leftishness,” Trotsky wrote that from this, it by no means followed that the Left Opposition “was changing places with the apparatus” and was criticizing it from the right. It would be an even more vulgar mistake to consider that the Stalinists had armed themselves with the ideas of the opposition. In actual fact, having described an arc of 180 degrees within one year, they

“were eliminating NEP, i.e., they were committing the same ‘crime’ of which they knowingly and falsely accused us, and for which our friends even today languish in prisons and exile. They replaced limits on the kulak with administrative dekulakization, which yesterday they maliciously attributed to us, and from which we dissociated ourselves with a clear Marxist conscience.”<sup>15</sup>

Previously, Stalin had actually supported Bukharin’s ideas that socialism would be built “at a tortoise pace,” and the kulak would painlessly grow into socialism. Later, he empirically lurched toward the opposite extreme:

“Now the tortoise pace has been replaced by one that is almost the speed of an aircraft. The kulak is no longer growing into socialism — at such a tempo you don’t grow into anything! — but is simply being liquidated administratively.”<sup>16</sup>

Instantaneously, the stated “program of suddenly liquidating the kulaks through collectivizing peasant carts, wooden ploughs and old nags”<sup>17</sup> is an “ultraleft caricature” of the course proposed by the Left Opposition in 1925–1927.

Thus, Trotsky did not renounce his previous assessments, according to which industrialization would demand a certain transfer of resources from the countryside. But he felt that complete collectivization, contradicting the desires and will of the overwhelming majority of the peasantry, and implemented by inhumane and violent methods, would only retard the development of industrialization. It would inevitably lead to the exhaustion of productive forces in the countryside, the worsening of food supplies for the workers in the city and the destruction of the social and political stability of society.

Trotsky finished his analysis of the first stage of complete collectivization with a prognosis:

“After today’s precarious offensive, a panicked retreat will follow, spontaneously from below and supposedly as a ‘maneuver’ from above ... The infallible leaders will, of course, accuse its executors of ‘Trotskyism.’”<sup>18</sup>

Having asked the question: “how many more months will today’s leaders spur on the party along the pathways of ultraleftism?” Trotsky replied:

“We think not for long. The more furious the present course, the more acutely and rapidly will its contradictions emerge. Then, after the 180 degrees already left behind, the leaders will describe an additional arc, approaching along the circle the point of departure from the other end.”<sup>19</sup>

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1. G. A. Bordiugov, V. A. Kozlov, *Istoriia i kon’iunktura* [History and the Current Situation], p. 81.

2. N. I. Bukharin, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, M., 1990, pp. 490, 494.

3. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13, p. 14 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, p. 15].

4. N. I. Bukharin, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, p. 490.

5. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1930, № 11, p. 13 [“A Squeak in the Apparatus,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 173].

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., p. 14 [Ibid., p. 174].

8. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1930, № 9, pp. 16–17.

9. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1930, № 10, pp. 19–20.

10. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 3 [See: “The New Course in the Soviet Economy,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, pp. 108–109].

11. Ibid., p. 4 [Ibid., p. 111].

12. Ibid., p. 3 [Ibid., p. 109].

13. Ibid. [Ibid., p. 110].

14. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1930, № 14, p. 37 [See: “Stalin as Theoretician,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 334].

15. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 6 [Cf.: “The New Course in the Soviet Economy,” in: *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 116].

16. Ibid., p. 4 [Ibid., p. 111].

17. Ibid. [Ibid.].

[18](#). Ibid., p. 6 [Ibid., p. 114].

[19](#). Ibid., pp. 6–7 [Ibid., p. 116].



И. СТАЛИН

36

# ГОЛОВОКРУЖЕНИЕ ОТ УСПЕХОВ.

24

К ВОПРОСАМ КОЛХОЗНОГО ДВИЖЕНИЯ

1) Куда раздвигать фронт, когда  
дело агитированных МКЗ?  
2) Как идет процесс  
объединения колхозов  
в МКЗ?

1 9 3 0

ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО

Stalin's "Dizziness from Success," in pamphlet form, 1930.

The notes on the cover are in Stalin's handwriting.



# 17. Stalin Retreats

Trotsky's prognosis came true a few weeks later. Confronting multiple peasant uprisings, in the second half of February 1930, the Central Committee gave instructions to local organizations to abandon haste in organizing collective farms and to halt dekulakization in regions where complete collectivization had still not begun. On March 2, *Pravda* published the model statutes of an agricultural artel, which stipulated the rejection of total socialization of all peasant livestock. The same issue of *Pravda* contained the article by Stalin, "Dizziness from Success," which indicated a sudden "rightward shift" by the organizer of collectivization. The article condemned "distortions" in carrying out collectivization, the main responsibility for which was placed on local party officials who were accused of "bungling."

Convinced that the political campaign he had unleashed had led to a frontal collision with the broadest peasant masses, Stalin condemned attempts "to spread kolkhozes by force" and declared that the kolkhoz movement should be built on principles of voluntary agreement. Meanwhile, he declared that the 50 percent level of collectivized peasant farms achieved by 20 February was a success of the kolkhoz movement, showing that "the fundamental turn of the village toward socialism could already be considered secure." Local officials were assigned the task "to *reinforce* the successes that had been achieved and *use* them in a planned way for the further movement forward."<sup>1</sup> The contradictory statements in the article left open a basic question for party organizations: should they change policy in the village or "reinforce" it?

The basic conclusions in the article were developed in a decree of the CC published on 15 March, "On the Struggle against Distortions of the Party Line in the Kolkhoz Movement." It condemned compulsion to join the kolkhozes under threat of dekulakization, resulting in some of the middle peasants, and even poor peasants, falling into the ranks of the "dekulakized." In several regions the percent of dekulakized reached 15, but collectivization "rose" from 10 to 90 percent in a few days. The decree also condemned instances of "exceptionally coarse, monstrous and criminal treatment of the population," forced socialization of living quarters, small livestock, and fowl. It ordered the reopening of bazaars and the halting of actions that had accompanied collectivizing activities: "the practice of closing churches in an administrative manner, falsely disguising this as the voluntary desire of the population."<sup>2</sup>

The situation in the countryside was more candidly assessed in a secret letter by the CC from 2 April 1930, "On the Tasks of the Kolkhoz Movement in Connection with Distortions of the Party Line." It openly spoke of the ominous situation that had arisen in connection with the mass insurgent movement of the peasantry. It had been necessary to use detachments of the Red Army to fight against the uprisings.

These decisions led to punitive measures against the organizers of the kolkhoz movement and dekulakization. Thousands of communists were expelled from the party and put on trial for all intents

and purposes because they, on direct orders from above and under the threat of expulsion from the party, had tried to “collectivize” in the shortest possible period as high a percentage of the peasant farms as possible. At the same time, some of those who had been dekulakized were rehabilitated: in several *okrugs* more than half of the dekulakized households were restored. In Kazakhstan, in the middle of 1930, 4,673 people were released from prison, 1,160 families were returned from exile, criminal cases of 2,264 people were closed, and the confiscated property of 9,533 households was returned. In just nine regions of the Khopior *okrug* on the Don — the first *okrug* where “complete collectivization” had been achieved in the country — 3,072 “incorrectly dekulakized” farms of poor and middle peasants were reestablished.

In recalling the article “Dizziness from Success,” Khrushchev wrote that its appearance had been preceded by a collectivizing fever that was whipped up from the center.

“Although the local activists had carried out collectivization with enthusiasm, or roughly speaking, with savage enthusiasm, they were always doing so under the whip of *Pravda*. If you take *Pravda* for this period, then it glistened from day to day with figures (in whose region what percent of the peasants had already been combined in kolkhozes), urging on the local party organizations. In 1929–1930, I had no direct contact with either the countryside, or even with the party activists carrying out this campaign. I was nourished only by figures from the pages of *Pravda* and was ecstatic ... And when the thunder resounded — the letter ‘Dizziness from Success’ — I was somewhat perplexed: how could this be, everything was fine, and then suddenly such a letter? But it became clear that it was needed, because the danger had been growing and had even already ripened. Several peasant uprisings had already broken out, and even bigger ones were about to happen.”

Retrospectively assessing the meaning of the article “Dizziness from Success,” Khrushchev wrote:

“Stalin had beat his head against the wall and could not break through it; therefore he was forced to retreat. But, in retreating, he shifted his own guilt onto others, and this cost those people very dearly.”<sup>3</sup>

The belated conclusions drawn by Khrushchev in the 1960s had been made by many Bolsheviks on the fresh tracks of collectivization. In the “Riutin Platform” of 1932, the article “Dizziness from Success” was described as a classical example of “Stalin’s way of dumping his own crimes on others.” The document states:

“It is well known that, approximately from the end of 1928, collectivization began to be carried out by methods of direct or indirect compulsion, and later — in 1929–1930 — by direct violence. ... Official decrees of the CC about ‘voluntary entry into the kolkhozes’ became simply the usual pharisaic and hypocritical cover for the exact opposite practice of collectivization.”<sup>4</sup>

The platform stressed that Stalin had sufficient information about the methods being used in collectivization. But he continued to “gamble everything and in the most shameful way to falsify the true situation in the newspapers, primarily in *Pravda*, his personal direct mouthpiece.” In the spring of 1930, when a wave of peasant rebellions never before seen in history was sweeping across the country, and he began to feel that the ground beneath his feet was on fire, then instead of an honest acknowledgment of the failure of his policy and the declaration of a new course,

“he pulled a stunt. The stunt was his article ‘Dizziness from Success’ ... As a result of this article ... local officials were sacrificed to the embittered masses in the countryside in order to deflect attention away from the true culprit, and Stalin appeared before the peasants as a savior from ‘local bunglers.’”<sup>5</sup>

As could be expected, immediately after the appearance of the article “Dizziness from Success,” the massive influx into the kolkhozes turned into an equally massive outflow. Because the hastily

organized kolkhozes were dissolved in the spring when sowing began, already by the summer of 1930 famine had begun in many rural localities. In recalling that time, Khrushchev wrote that he was sent to a kolkhoz sponsored by the Industrial Academy to hand over money for purchasing farm implements. It was only during this trip that he learned of the actual situation in the village.

“Earlier I had practically no idea of how things were because we lived in isolation at the Industrial Academy and did not know how the countryside was getting along. We arrived there and were literally greeted by famine. Because of their hunger, people moved about like autumn flies ... They all asked the same thing, that we give them bread, but the machinery made little impression on them: people were literally starving, and I was seeing this for the first time.”<sup>6</sup>



*Demonstration of Red Army collective farmers urging individual farmers to join collectives.*

After the appearance of the article “Dizziness from Success,” the CC and Stalin personally began to receive many letters with questions about what the political attitude toward the kolkhoz movement now was. On 3 April Stalin published the article “A Reply to Kolkhoz Comrades.” He extensively argued that the new directives could not be seen as a retreat by the party, and he once again assigned responsibility for “excesses” on local party officials, declaring that “it is difficult to halt a furious race on time and return people to a correct path when they are galloping headlong toward the abyss.”<sup>7</sup>

In order to return the peasants to the kolkhozes, Stalin resorted to a new, and this time “economic,” maneuver. He announced that “within days” a decision would be made to lift taxes for two years on livestock and fowl owned individually by collective farmers; all fines and court penalties levied against them would be canceled; and payment of debt obligations would be postponed. However, peasants who had left the kolkhozes would not receive these benefits. They would gain the right to them only after returning to the kolkhozes.<sup>8</sup>



Stalin's new maneuvers were quickly exposed on the pages of the *Bulletin of the Opposition*. A letter from a group of oppositionists stressed:

"Life has soon shown the bankruptcy of the adventurist policy. Yesterday's general line toward the most rapid collectivization has been declared a left-wing excess committed by bunglers. The present turn is very murky, therefore it is still very difficult to evaluate it. In any case: 1) Its bankruptcy is not acknowledged. 2) The slogan of complete collectivization and liquidation of the kulak still remains ... For now what is clear is only that Stalin's latest articles and the resolution of the CC on excesses have disorganized the party even more."<sup>9</sup>

Other letters described the destructive consequences of several months of collectivizing frenzy:

"Complete collectivization not only did not raise the marketable value of agricultural products, it struck marketability so hard that nothing remained of it. The cities sit there without butter, meat, eggs, and potatoes; even the capitals have shifted to microscopic rations."

Even greater suffering befell the countryside.

"What people are writing about the distortions of village policy occurring in a number of places is in actual fact the general rule. An ape does not recognize itself in the mirror. Our *okrug* of complete collectivization does not differ from others. Here they have socialized everything, right down to the last chicken, they have dekulakized right down to the felt boots pulled off the feet of little children."<sup>10</sup>



*Peasants meeting in Donetsk area, 1930.*

One of the oppositionists vividly described his conversation with a communist who until then had never dared to criticize the "general line," even in private conversations:

"'How are things going,' I asked him. 'You don't look so good, you look tired.'

"'You can say that again. You wouldn't look so good either if you had been, as I have, in a village for a number of months ... I'll tell you straight out: if the bourgeoisie had sent us as saboteurs, they couldn't have done any better than Stalin. One can



imagine that we are facing a colossal provocation ...’

“And he began to tell me about the deeds that had been accomplished in the course of the illustrious period of ‘dizziness.’ I won’t repeat this, because the picture was one and the same everywhere.”<sup>11</sup>

One more letter described the methods used against the peasants who refused to enter the kolkhozes: the simultaneous collection of all payments that previously had been made over several months; the imposition of ruinous fines for trivial offenses; the holding of repeated and exhausting night meetings for registration into the kolkhoz, with guards standing at the doorways; inventory of property owned by many middle peasants, which meant the threat of “dekulakization.” “These were not ‘excesses,’” the author of the letter emphasized, “but officially sanctioned methods of collectivization everywhere.” The letter was just as sharp in its assessment of the organization and payment of labor in the newly organized kolkhozes, perceived by the peasants as a “new *barshchina* [corvée/unpaid labor].” This system provoked among them:

“a ferocious hatred for such involuntary, unpaid labor ... Such conditions of labor are the rule, not the exception, and every protest against them is called a kulak assault. The impression created is that someone is deliberately and consistently implementing a whole system of procedures in order to once and for all discredit the very idea of kolkhozes in the eyes of the peasants. It seems to me that this has already been achieved to a significant degree. It is not surprising that, with the appearance of Stalin’s article ‘Dizziness,’ which reproduced the classical practice of blaming the ‘switchman’ [for a catastrophe], the disintegration of the kolkhozes began ... As for those abandoning the kolkhozes, the poor peasants and weaker middle peasants are leaving before other groups, since they cannot endure the practice of unpaid labor for long. The well-to-do middle peasants are in no hurry to leave, since they view the kolkhoz as insurance from intolerable taxes and they fear a new squeeze on the upper layers of the village.”<sup>12</sup>

In an article sent from Siberian exile by Fyodor Dingelshtedt, a member of the party since 1910, a review of Stalin’s policy in the countryside ended with the conclusion:

“Complete collectivization, carried out by methods of the Prishibeyevs,<sup>13</sup> has brought the economy to a state of devastation long since unheard of: it’s as if a three-year war has rolled through, seizing whole villages, *raions* and *okrugs*.”<sup>14</sup>

A comprehensive analysis and assessment of forced collectivization was contained in “An Appeal of the Opposition of Bolshevik-Leninists to the CC, CCC of the VKP(b) and to all Members of the VKP(b)” (April 1930). The document, signed by Rakovsky, V. Kosior, Muralov and Kasparova, indicated that in 1928–1929, the opposition invariably spoke against the use of extraordinary measures.

“The correctness of this criticism has found new confirmation in the economic and political crisis, whose consequences lie still ahead and which has been caused by the policy of complete collectivization and its stormy and lamentable collapse ... As soon as information about complete collectivization made its way into the press, we — Bolshevik-Leninists, including L. D. Trotsky — pointed out in December and January the rottenness and harmfulness of this slogan ... Here, too, events have justified our prognosis, and sooner than we could have expected.”

The authors of the “Appeal” noted that the very directive on complete collectivization, “regardless of whether the date set for this was fifteen years, as it was in the beginning, or one year, as was done later,” is the most vulgar deviation from socialism and the greatest economic absurdity. They also noted the absurdity of the “abolition by decree of the kulak as a class, and the abolition of NEP.”<sup>15</sup>

The “Appeal” emphasized that the attempt to blame the failure of complete collectivization on the lack of principles and political mediocrity of local apparatchiks was in fact an acknowledgment of the failure of the party leadership, since responsibility for the quality of the apparatus lay precisely on it. The CC had every possibility to forestall violence in the countryside. However, it said not a word about this danger, either in the resolution of the November plenum of 1929 on kolkhoz construction, or when reports began to pour in from everywhere about outrages occurring in the villages. “Excesses” were condemned only when a breakdown in the sowing campaign became noticeable.

The authors of the “Appeal” saw the decree of the Central Committee from 15 March 1930 as a virtual admission of defeat which was threatening to grow into a catastrophe. They stressed that

“the party and communism bear no responsibility for this defeat, for *complete* collectivization was undertaken in violation of the party’s program, in violation of the most elementary principles of Marxism, and in disregard of the most elementary warnings made by Lenin about collectivization, the middle peasantry, and NEP. Nevertheless, both the party and communism had received an extremely cruel lesson as a result of centrist ultraleftism.”<sup>[16](#)</sup>

This ultra-left course was dictated by the selfish interests of the ruling layer, insofar as complete collectivization, by inevitably increasing the number of “overseers” over the peasants, “would widen the army of the bureaucracy, increase its share of the national income, and reinforce its power over the masses.”<sup>[17](#)</sup>

The “Appeal” noted that the virtual breakdown of collectivization was caused by the bureaucratic system of management, under which the power of the working class and the party had been usurped “by functionaries who had turned into a separate ruling social group [сословие: estate]”. This breakdown was expressed primarily in the changed attitude of the peasants toward the party, which was personified in their eyes by the apparatus, “which utters threats more than words, acts through violence and tyrannical behavior, and which Lenin had earlier said degrades Soviet citizens. Instead of the example given by Lenin, and mentioned in the party program, — the living example which should have convinced the middle peasant of the advantages of the kolkhoz — the peasant is offered a mousetrap. And in response to this kind of collectivization, he has answered with his usual methods: strikes, active or passive, or else entry into the kolkhoz in order to blow it up from within through technological self-destruction (slaughtering livestock and so forth).”<sup>[18](#)</sup>

Restoring the peasantry’s trust in the party could be reached only through restoring legality, and both soviet and party democracy, without which “all corrective measures inevitably turn into deformations. Only the revolutionary control of the masses is able to hold the apparatus in submission.”<sup>[19](#)</sup>

The documents cited above allow one to understand why Stalin, during the period of forced collectivization, was worried primarily not by the “Rightists,” who remained in the Central Committee, but had already been completely broken and were incapable of any kind of resistance. He was more concerned about Trotsky, interned on Prinkipo Island, and about his co-thinkers who were languishing in exile and in political isolators, but who were continuing their political activity by the only means they had left, ideological methods. In ways unbeknownst to the GPU, the *Bulletin of the*

*Opposition* was brought into the USSR and then read by many communists. It was distributed to party higher-ups, above all members of the Politburo, not all of whom were ready to unquestioningly follow Stalin in his adventurist twists and turns. For this reason, Stalin was compelled to preserve the appearance of an ideological struggle against “Trotskyism,” allowing the publication in the official Soviet press of excerpts from works by Trotsky and other leaders of the Left Opposition, accompanied, of course, with crudely tendentious commentaries. It is true that Stalin himself, as a rule, avoided direct polemics with Trotsky and his supporters. He left this work to his many ideological helpers, among whom the leading role was played by Emelian Yaroslavsky.

On 30 March, *Pravda* published an article by Yaroslavsky, “From the Left to the Right,” which interpreted Trotsky’s criticism of complete collectivization as a shift to the positions of Social-

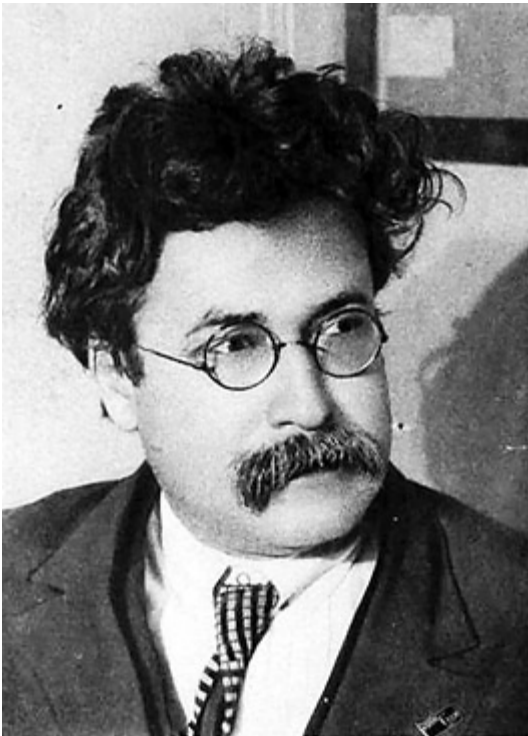
Democracy. Trotsky replied to this article with his own, “A Squeak in the Apparatus” (written on 13 April 1930), in which he assessed Stalin’s forced retreat that had led by that time to a reduction of the portion of collectivized peasant farms from 60 to 40 percent. Trotsky wrote:

“We have no doubt that he will be compelled — always trailing behind the real process — to retreat by a healthy percentage more.<sup>20</sup> In foreseeing this, a few months ago, i.e., at the very height of the collectivizing frenzy, we warned against the consequences of bureaucratic adventurism. If the party had read our warnings in their genuine form, and not in Yaroslavsky’s belated distortions, many mistakes could have been, if not avoided, then greatly mitigated.”<sup>21</sup>

In the article “A Squeak in the Apparatus,” Trotsky developed his thesis, described by Yaroslavsky as “complete renegacy,” that the middle peasants were vacillating between collectivization and civil war. Referring to reports

in the Soviet press about the mass destruction and selling-off by the peasants of their livestock and agricultural inventory, he characterized this process as the natural reaction to the abolition of NEP and to forced collectivization, as “a quiet, sabotaging form of civil war. Here lies the sharpness of the situation and its danger, which will grow tenfold if it is not understood in time.”<sup>22</sup>

While basing himself on an analysis of the first lessons of complete collectivization, Trotsky once again described his attitude toward the peasantry. The immediate pretext for this was Yaroslavsky’s assertion that Trotsky, who supposedly had always considered the peasantry a force hostile to socialism, could not imagine it otherwise than cattle, than a herd, which “bolts” into the open gates of collectivization. “I never compared the peasantry to a herd,” Trotsky replied to this claim. “... I never considered the peasantry a hostile force. But I also never considered it a conscious socialist force.”



*Emelian Yaroslavsky*  
(1878–1943)

Such a view of the peasantry was held by Marx and Engels who had written about the idiocy of rural life. From these words, the Populists in their day had deduced an imaginary hostility of Marxists toward the peasantry. In actual fact, these words only stated the distinguishing features of the peasantry (as it had been in Europe in the nineteenth century, and as it had remained in the USSR toward the beginning of collectivization): its horrifying fragmentation and terribly strong dependence on natural elements. From these traits flow the contradictory nature of the peasantry's social position and psychology.

“To the same extent that the peasant is a realist in questions of his environment, he becomes a victim of blind instinct in major questions. The entire history of the peasantry consists of the fact that, after decades or centuries of grievous immobility, it has jumped in one direction, and then in another ... In order to free the peasant from the elemental forces pressing down on his consciousness, he must be depeasantized. This is the task of socialism. But it is solved not by formal collectivization, but by a revolution in agricultural technology.”<sup>23</sup>

In the passages cited, the thesis of “depeasantization” [раскрестьянивание] deserves special attention. In recent years, many journalists have widely used this concept, understanding it to mean the loss by the peasant of the feeling of being master of the land and of the produce he has created.

With Trotsky, the concept of “depeasantization” had a fundamentally different meaning. By “depeasantization,” he understood the liberation of the peasantry from social helplessness in confronting the elemental forces of nature. In this sense, “depeasantization” has already occurred in advanced capitalist countries. The modern capitalist farmer, possessing an education, as a rule, no lower than a high-school vocational training; using the latest technology and the highest achievements of the biotechnological revolution; involved in diverse cooperative ties; supported by state subsidies; and surrounded by a developed productive and social infrastructure — such a farmer is strikingly different in his social profile, way of life and character of labor from the Western European peasant of the nineteenth century or the Russian peasant of the 1920s, who lived, in the words of Gleb Uspensky, “under the power of the land.”<sup>24</sup> Under capitalism, pauperization and the ruination of very many peasant farms accompanied the process of “depeasantization,” which in turn was accompanied by a relentless reduction in the number and proportion of people engaged in agriculture (down to 3 to 5 percent at present in advanced capitalist countries). Trotsky thought that, under conditions of socialist construction, this process might take forms that were much less painful for millions of peasants. He saw the reason for the directly opposite effect of Stalin's collectivization in the following: instead of voluntary and gradual collectivization, indissolubly linked with the industrialization of agriculture, the bureaucracy chose the utopian-reactionary path of the hasty and forced creation of “major collective farms without the only technological basis that could have secured their advantage over small-scale farms.” On this path, the inevitable

“sharp turns, affecting the life foundations of twenty-five million peasant farms and thoughtlessly tugging them for a whole year to the left and to the right, cannot pass without leaving its mark on the party. Centrist shortsightedness and bureaucratic adventurism will emerge from this experience deeply compromised.”<sup>25</sup>

Already by the beginning of the 1930s Trotsky had foreseen that, even with the “successful” completion of wholesale collectivization, labor in the kolkhozes would, for a prolonged period, be



less productive and effective than labor in small-scale, petty commodity peasant farms. The danger of collectivization driven by “three lashes of the bureaucracy,” consisted in this:

“Given the artificial, i.e., premature creation of large kolkhozes, where labor of the solitary peasant drowns in the labor of tens and hundreds of other peasants using the same individual implements, the cultivation of the land, due to the loss of personal stimulus, can turn out to be even lower than in individual peasant farms.”<sup>26</sup>

This danger was deepened by the following:

“The kolkhoz, unjustified by its technological basis, inevitably creates a parasitic economic bureaucracy, the worst of all. The peasant, who often in history has been a passive base of support for all kinds of bureaucratism in the realm of government oversight, absolutely does not tolerate bureaucratism in the immediate agricultural realm. This must not be forgotten.”<sup>27</sup>

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1. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 191–193 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, pp. 197–198].
  2. *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh*, vol. 5, pp. 101–104.
  3. *Voprosy istorii*, 1990, № 3, p. 60.
  4. *Reabilitatsiia*, pp. 346–347.
  5. *Ibid.*
  6. *Voprosy istorii*, 1990, № 2, p. 96.
  7. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, p. 213 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, pp. 218–219].
  8. *Ibid.*, pp. 222–223 [*Ibid.*, pp. 228–229].
  9. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 11, p. 33.
  10. *Ibid.*
  11. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 17–18, p. 38.
  12. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 11, p. 32.
  13. From “Sergeant Prishibeyev,” written by Anton Chekhov in 1885. Prishibeyev is a retired NCO obsessed with forcibly restoring order among village peasants whom he despises as ignorant and unruly (*translator*).
  14. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 12–13, p. 18.
  15. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 17–18, pp. 12–13.
  16. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
  17. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
  18. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 18.
  19. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
  20. At the end of 1930, slightly more than one-fifth of peasant farms remained in kolkhozes.
  21. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 11, p. 14 [Cf.: “A Squeak in the Apparatus,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 174].
  22. *Ibid.*, p. 13 [*Ibid.*, p. 172].
  23. *Ibid.*, p. 17 [*Ibid.*, pp. 181–182].
  24. *The Power of the Land* (1882), one of Gleb Uspensky’s major works, describes peasant life in rural Russia.
  25. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 10, pp. 3–4.
  26. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 11, p. 6 [Cf.: “Toward Capitalism or Socialism,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 201] .
  27. *Ibid.*, p 7 [*Ibid.*, p. 202].

# 18. The Sixteenth Congress: “Finishing Off” the “Rightists”

In July 1930, the party’s Sixteenth Congress opened amidst a massive exodus of peasants from the collective farms, extreme tension in the economy, and a sharp fall in living standards both in the cities and in the countryside.

In the prelude to the congress, the idea was debated among “rightists” about carrying out a “palace coup” against Stalin, but the leaders at these illegal factional meetings decisively rejected this choice. According to Avtorkhanov, on the eve of the congress a group of “activists” gathered who had long been demanding energetic action from their leaders to overthrow Stalin. Referring to the bankruptcy of Stalin’s policy and to the peasant uprisings, they directly asked Bukharin, who had been invited to the meeting:

“When life has confirmed your most gloomy prognoses in all branches of domestic policy, and the peasants, brought to a state of despair, have been voting for you with their own blood, can it possibly be, after all this, that you intend to vote for Stalin at the Sixteenth Congress?”

Bukharin evasively replied that attacks against the Stalinists from above had not been crowned with success, therefore the party line could only be corrected from below. In response to this, one of the “activists” declared that party membership cards from the lower ranks of the party were powerless against the apparatus, therefore, the only thing that remained in the arsenal of ways to fight was “surgery.” In reply, Bukharin began to argue at length that the ideals of socialism and social justice, in whose name the revolution was made, could not be sacrificed to a struggle among groups in the upper echelons of the party. He then concluded his words with the sophism: “Ineptly driving a magnificent automobile by no means speaks to the defects of the car itself. It is absurd to smash a vehicle simply in order to remove the driver.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite the “troika’s” virtual abandonment of political struggle, Stalin did not manage to avoid a pre-congress discussion, which in several party organizations turned into support for the “rightists.” That is what happened at the Industrial Academy, where the party cell was headed by representatives of the “old guard” who had adopted an anti-Stalin position.<sup>2</sup> This group was opposed by a minority group of young party members “who adopted the positions of the Central Committee.” Khrushchev belonged to the latter.

The sharpness of the struggle was expressed, to some degree, by the fact that Khrushchev had failed several times to be elected to the presidium of party meetings and to the bureau of the party cell. Despite a number of articles in *Pravda* about the “preponderance of rightists” at the Industrial Academy, at its party meeting, Bukharin and Rykov were elected along with Stalin as delegates to the regional conference. After this election, Mekhlis called Khrushchev to *Pravda* and proposed that he sign an article already prepared by the editors that criticized the “unhealthy atmosphere” at the



*Nikita S. Khrushchev*  
(1894–1971)

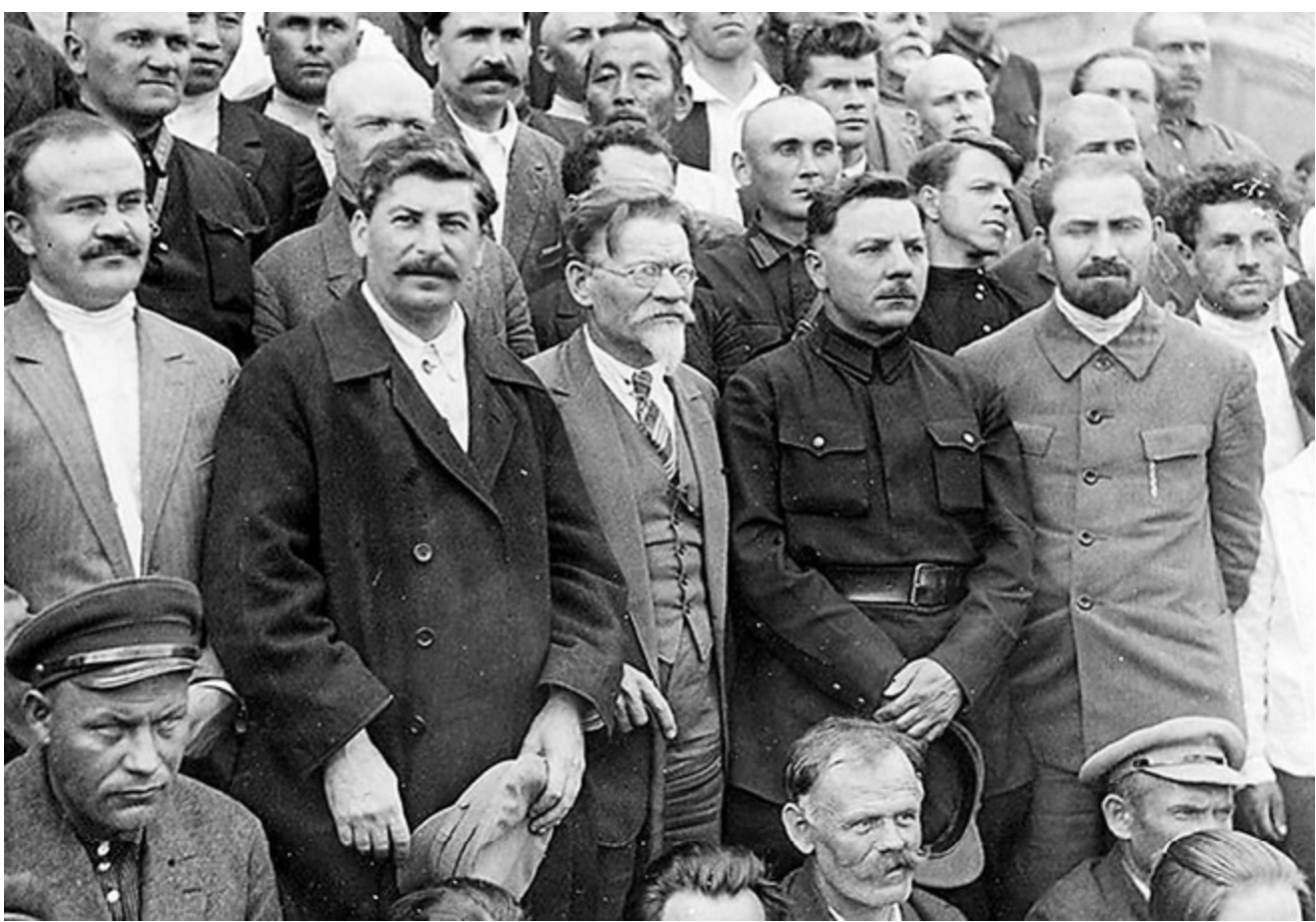
Industrial Academy's party organization. The day after the article appeared, a new party meeting was held at which all the delegates chosen earlier, except Stalin, were recalled. "Supporters of the general line" were selected for the regional conference, including Khrushchev, who became the secretary of the party organization at the academy. At the regional conference Khrushchev declared that the "election of 'rightists' had been a subterfuge of the former party leadership at the academy who sympathized with the 'rightists.' They had lost all trust and had been voted out."<sup>3</sup> These events determined Khrushchev's further fate. By January 1931 he had already been elected secretary of the

Bauman Regional Committee of the party, and this was followed by the beginning of his rapid ascent up the ladder of the party hierarchy.

Khrushchev also recalled that the pre-congress conference of the Bauman region proceeded tumultuously. Nadezhda Krupskaya spoke at the conference, but her speech "was not in keeping with the party's general line" and the conference condemned her contribution.<sup>4</sup>

Quite a few letters condemning Stalin arrived at the editorial board of *Pravda*. The majority of them were of course shelved. However, some letters protesting against laying blame for "excesses" on "scapegoats" nevertheless appeared on the pages of *Pravda*. Thus, an article by Mamaev said:

"Whose head, after all, began to spin? ...We proclaim one thing, but in fact do another. So, there's no need to confuse the issue. We must speak about our own wounds and not teach this to the lower ranks of the party masses. ... It turns out, 'the Tsar is good, but the local officials are useless' ... We must examine the causes of the excesses under a Leninist microscope and not punish the obedient executors for them — the village communists."<sup>5</sup>



*Molotov, Stalin, Kalinin, Voroshilov, Kaganovich at Sixteenth Party Congress, 1930.*

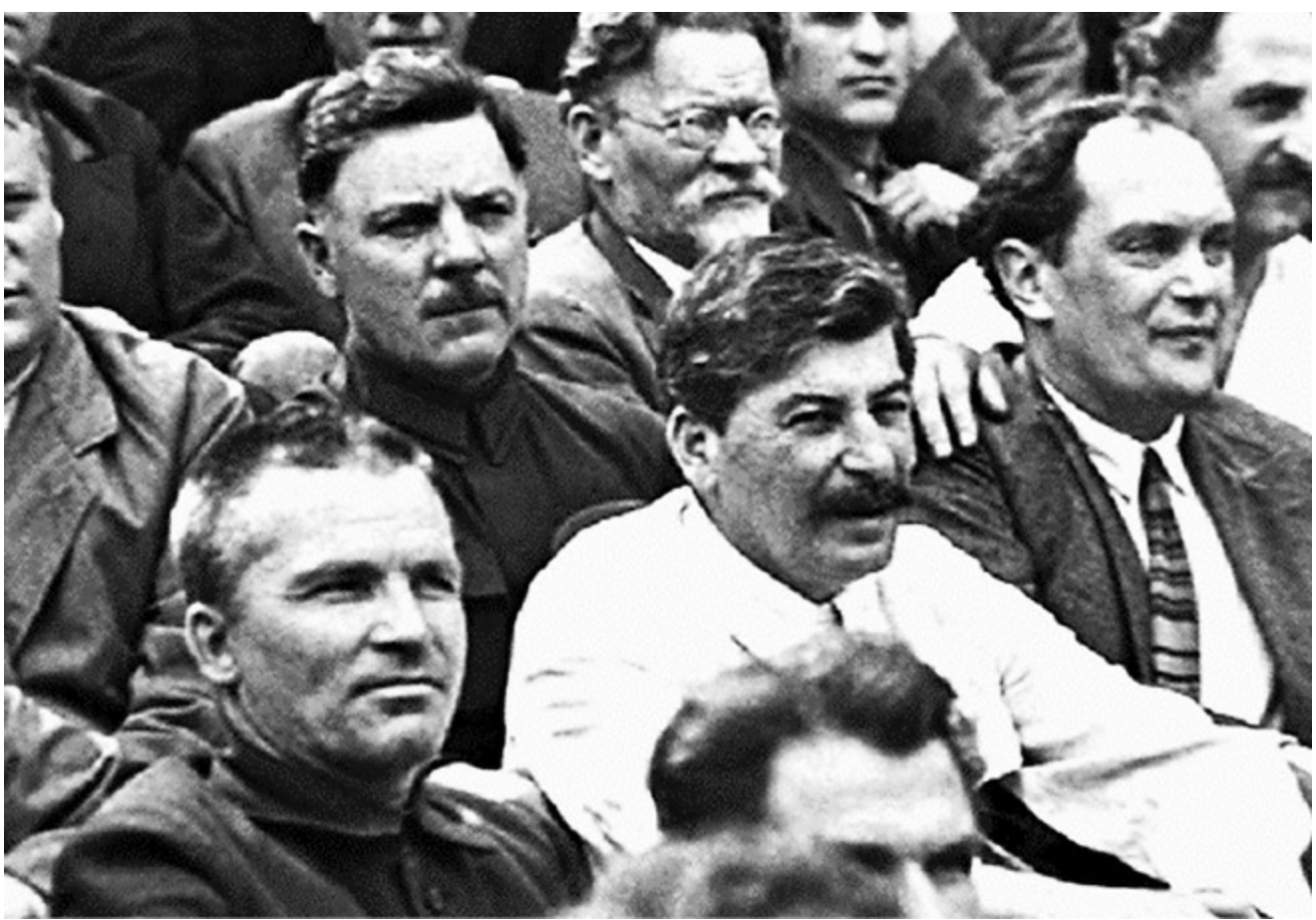
However, moods of this kind did not find reflection at the congress itself, which, as would be characteristic of all subsequent party congresses, was distinguished by its extreme exuberance. Such a tone was set, in particular, by the speech of the elder party historian, Mikhail Pokrovsky, who described forced industrialization and collectivization as an indicator of “the country’s entry into socialism.” “In 1921, we often heard the prognosis: ‘O, it will be enough for us to make it through an interim period of twenty-five years, and then in another twenty-five years we will build socialism,’” he said.

“I thought then: we won’t live long enough to see this. But we have ... I don’t know if I am fully authorized to do this, but I would like, on behalf of my generation, to express gratitude to everyone who is building socialism (Krzhizhanovsky: ‘You may, you may!’ Prolonged and stormy applause).”<sup>6</sup>

In his main report, Stalin spoke of the “gigantic success” of industrialization and collectivization, about the correctness and victory of the “party’s general line.” In doing so, as the “Riutin Platform” pointed out, Stalin remained silent about two decisive facts that reduced all of his boastful claims to nothing. First of all, he

“concealed from the party that at this time the entire textile industry with 600,000 workers was at a standstill for four months due to a lack of raw material; a number of other branches of light industry, as well as hundreds of enterprises of heavy industry, worked at two-thirds or even half capacity.”<sup>7</sup>





*Kirov, Voroshilov, Kalinin, Stalin, Kuibyshev at Sixteenth Party Congress, 1930.*

Secondly, he uttered not a word about the wave of unprecedented peasant uprisings that had just taken place throughout the land.

The Sixteenth Congress resembled the previous congress in its heated criticism of the opposition. The only difference was that people now spoke not about “finishing off” the formal opposition that was continuing to defend its views, but about finishing off “deviationists,” not one of whom had uttered a word in defense of their views, let alone had dared to criticize Stalin’s adventuristic course which had taken on particularly dangerous forms and scale after the capitulation of the Bukharin group.

During discussion of the political report of the Central Committee, most attention was devoted, not to an analysis of the economic and socio-political problems that had become extremely acute, but to unrestrained attacks on leaders of the “Right Opposition.” Kirov demanded that they acknowledge their platform as a “kulak program,” leading to the demise of socialist construction. He declared:

“Every added percentage of the tempo in our industrialization, every added kolkhoz, all this was achieved not only in a struggle against the kulak and other counter-revolutionary elements in our nation, it was achieved in a struggle against comrades Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsy and Uglanov.”<sup>8</sup>

“I cannot, comrades, think without a shudder about what would have happened with the proletarian revolution, with the working class, if the line of the rightists had been victorious,”<sup>9</sup> Kosarev exclaimed bombastically. “You repented at the November Plenum, you repented yesterday, but apart from that you have done nothing,” Rudzutak warned the “rightists.” He was the first to inform the

congress about negotiations between Bukharin and Kamenev, describing them as “a conspiracy against the CC.”<sup>[10](#)</sup>

The thoroughly demoralized “Right Opposition” seemed to compete with each other in confessing their “errors,” while trying to refute only the most odious accusations. While denying the existence of a “faction” among the rightists, Tomsky nevertheless confessed that their activity bore within itself “the germs of factionalism”:

“How could it be otherwise? ... Joint documents with their own line, joint formulations, joint meetings around definite questions, — here, of course, elements of factionalism are present.”

In response to a demand to repent, Tomsky declared that “repentance” is not a Bolshevik term, and sadly noted:

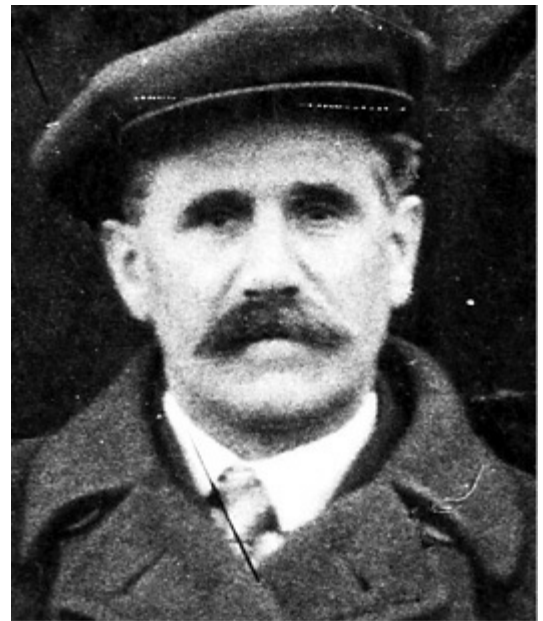
“It is somewhat difficult to play the role of an endlessly repentant man. Several comrades share the following sentiments — repent, repent without end, and only repent ... Let us begin to work at least a little bit.”<sup>[11](#)</sup>

Leaders of the “Right Opposition” were destined to experience the full measure of the devices which they had used along with Stalin against the earlier oppositions. As proof of their “factional activity,” information was introduced that had been received via denunciations. M. Penkov, former member of the Moscow Committee, gave a detailed account of “factional work” in the Moscow organization, claiming that

“the leaders of the Right Opposition encouraged us to develop our work a bit more rapidly, to mobilize a bit more rapidly the party organizations, the party and working-class masses. Individual comrades were sent for indoctrination to comrade Bukharin so that this opposition work would be more fruitful.”<sup>[12](#)</sup>



*Mikhail P. Tomsky*  
(1880–1936)



*Nikolai A. Uglanov*  
(1886–1937)

In the organizational report of the CC, Kaganovich declared that “Uglanov is still working against the CC ... until now he has still been indoctrinating people quietly, secretly, against the party’s CC.”<sup>[13](#)</sup> In response to this charge, on the next day Uglanov confessed “absolutely candidly” that over the recent months he had once again felt serious doubts about the correctness of the policy in the

countryside which he had shared with several comrades. Insofar as Uglanov remained silent about the most “criminal” moment of these conversations, new accusations rained down on him about the reticence of his confessions. After this, Uglanov sent a declaration to the Presidium of the congress which said:

“In the struggle against the party line I tried in discussions with many party members to present comrade Stalin as the main person to blame for the situation that has been created in the party. I consider this my severe mistake. Comrade Stalin has shown in his guidance of the party that he deserves to be the leader of the party.”<sup>14</sup>

At the Fifteenth Congress in 1927, remarks from the audience when oppositionists were speaking were aimed at preventing them from presenting their arguments. Now such remarks were tossed out to humiliate the “rightists” even more. This occurred not only during the speeches by Rykov, Tomsy and Uglanov (Bukharin was absent from the congress due to illness), but even during the speech by Krupskaya, who was often interrupted with shouts: “How about Rykov and Tomsy,” “Not enough, be more precise,” “Not clear,” “Definitely not enough.”<sup>15</sup>

In their speeches, Stalin’s closest supporters often uttered variations of Mikoyan’s idea that the rightists “weren’t treated too badly.”<sup>16</sup> Voroshilov even spoke of “the angelic patience shown by all members of the Politburo with regard to Bukharin, Tomsy and Rykov,” a patience “that has not been rewarded.” He vowed that “Lenin’s hand was a hundred times more inflexible and firm than Stalin’s, although the latter was often accused of being inflexible.”<sup>17</sup>

Insofar as the “rightists” were under the threat of even greater persecution, they essentially could not reply to a single accusation against them; they were forced to listen silently to the most fantastic and contradictory versions about the evolution of their views. Thus, Voroshilov explained that their “fall from grace” was not a protest against the break of the Stalin group from the previous policy that had been conducted together with the Bukharinists, but:

“while scuffling with Trotsky-Zinoviev, the rightists thought that the entire Leninist party had adopted an openly right-wing program, and that after the rout of the ‘leftist’ opportunists it would begin to follow a new, right-wing path. ... Literally on the second day after the Fifteenth Congress, Rykov, Tomsy and Bukharin showed their true face; they began to move to the right before our very eyes and speak against the policy of the CC (especially on the question of grain procurements).”<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to this version of “the rightward movement” of the Bukharin group, Pokrovsky declared that “the right deviation is a world outlook that we can trace very deeply even in our literature.” He rebuked Bukharin and his followers for trying to prove from 1924 on that “our peasant has no inherent feeling of ownership, that he never has possessed land, that he is, to put it succinctly, almost a socialist, and that what’s the point of collectivization, he will grow into it on his own.”<sup>19</sup> The venerable historian did not feel it was necessary to explain why, in this case, such views in the five years preceding the “great turn” had constituted the theoretical credo of the party’s leadership, and the “Bukharin school” had been under its protection from criticism by the Left Opposition.

On the whole, those who spoke at the Sixteenth Congress worried little about the logical consistency of their arguments. Any argument was suitable if it could be used to strike a more painful blow at the opposition that had already capitulated. Absolute unity was displayed only in “defense” of Stalin from the accusations that had been disseminated among the “rightists.”



Yaroslavsky denounced Bukharin and his supporters for “systematically discrediting comrade Stalin from one day to the next.”<sup>20</sup> Rudzutak read out a passage from the “troika’s” February declaration containing a protest against the fact that “control on the part of the collective has been replaced by control on the part of one, albeit authoritative, person.” He then declared that, in this passage,

“there is not only a protest against the existing party regime, but there is ... outright slander against comrade Stalin, against whom they are trying to accuse of attempts at individual leadership of our party. As a member of the CC, I must say here in passing that, during the entire time of our joint work with comrade Stalin in the CC, we cannot provide a single example, not a single instance, when he tried to impose his own will and his own opinion against the majority of the CC, against the opinion of the collective.”<sup>21</sup>



*Mikhail N. Pokrovsky*  
(1868–1932)

“Our party and the working class are completely correct in identifying comrade Stalin with the general line of our party, leading the USSR from victory to victory. It is precisely for this reason that the party greets comrade Stalin with such enthusiasm and inspiration (Applause). Neither Trotsky, nor Bukharin, nor Rykov, nor Tomsy understand this.”<sup>22</sup>

The criticism of Stalin by the rightists was seen as evidence of their transition to Trotsky’s positions. “You remember,” said Ordzhonikidze, “how Trotsky persecuted Stalin. Literally everything came down to the fact that in all disagreements, in every battle, Stalin was to blame ... What have the rightists been doing in this regard? I will not provide citations, but I will say — in exactly the same way, using the same words, they have been attacking comrade Stalin just like Trotsky attacked him previously.” Ordzhonikidze continued:

“Our party and the working class are completely correct in identifying comrade Stalin with the general line of our party, leading the USSR from victory to victory. It is precisely for this reason that the party greets comrade Stalin with such enthusiasm and inspiration (Applause). Neither Trotsky, nor Bukharin, nor Rykov, nor Tomsy understand this.”<sup>22</sup>

Postyshev recalled that Zinoviev and Kamenev “began with accusing the CC and comrade Stalin of semi-Trotskyism, and then ended with an amnesty, a bloc with Trotsky, in order to fight against the party, against the CC.” He then offered the supposition: “Doesn’t the silence of the rightists when it comes to Trotsky’s capitulationist platform essentially signify a peculiar amnesty for Trotsky for the sake of forming a bloc with him?”<sup>23</sup> In these and other speeches like them, criticism of Stalin was equated with criticism of the CC and “the party’s general line.” At the same time, a concentrated “image of the enemy” was established — of Trotsky and “Trotskyism,” to which all oppositional elements of the party were added. The tactic of creating this “image of the enemy,” that had already been developed in the 1920s, allowed real social and economic problems to be concealed behind crude political invective.





*Lazar M. Kaganovich*  
(1893–1991)



*Aleksei F. Losev*  
(1893–1988)



*Vladimir M. Kirshon*  
(1902–1938)

Although speeches at the Sixteenth Congress did not end with toasts in Stalin's honor (this would occur at the following congress), the majority of greetings and reports to the congress composed by obsequious apparatchiks included the formula not used at previous congresses about Stalin as "the leader of the party."

One more innovation tried out at the Sixteenth Congress was the distribution to delegates of confessions obtained by the GPU from arrested "saboteurs" who were non-party scientists and engineers. These testimonies were cited in many speeches as proof that "all specialists eagerly listened to any disagreements in the party and, regardless of what deviation the opposition represented, always wished it success."

The Sixteenth Congress clearly witnessed the line of "tightening the screws" all along the entire "ideological front." Thus, Kaganovich expressed indignation with regard to the publication of seven books by the "philosopher-obscurantist" Aleksei Losev, and especially of "the latest book of this reactionary and member of the Black Hundreds, *Dialectics of the Myth*"<sup>24</sup> (By this time, Losev was already a prisoner in the Solovki camp). The charge against Losev of "openly Black-Hundreds, monarchist utterances" was repeated by the writer Kirshon. He also accused the literary group "Pereval" [Mountain Pass] "of advancing the slogan of humanism and love of fellow-men in response to the slogan of liquidating the kulaks as a class."<sup>25</sup>

социал-демократия боится победы фашистов, отражая этим революционную тревогу рабочих, постольку она имела известное объективное право использовать нашу критику политики сталинцев, оказавшей огромную услугу фашистам. Основой этого ее «права» является, однако, не наша брошюра, а ваша политика, о, мудрые стратеги! Вы говорите, что мы оказались в «едином фронте» с Вельсом и Зеверингом? Только на этой почве и только в

тех размерах, в каких вы оказались в едином фронте с Гитлером и его черносотенными бандами. Да и тут еще с той разницей, что у вас дело шло о совместном политическом действии, у нас же свелось лишь к двусмысленному использованию противником нескольких цитат.

Когда Сократ выставял философский принцип «познай самого себя», то он несомненно имел в виду Тельмана, Ноймана и даже самого Реммеле.

Л. Т.

## НА СЪЕЗДЕ И В СТРАНЕ

Ниже печатаемая обширная работа г. Христиана Георгиевича Раковского получена Редакцией — по независящим от нее обстоятельствам — с большим запозданием. Исключительная ценность работы, ее в основном программно-стратегический, а не конъюнктурный характер, сохраняет все ее огромное значение. Ред.

### ПРЕДВАРИТЕЛЬНЫЕ ЗАМЕЧАНИЯ

Настоящая статья представляет собой попытку на конкретном материале проиллюстрировать некоторые положения, которые еще несколько месяцев тому назад отпугивали некоторых, но которые уже сегодня, под влиянием быстро разворачивающихся событий, превратились в бесспорные истины. Вторая задача состоит в том, чтобы, опираясь на известный анализ, несколько продвинуть вперед наше понимание сущности процессов, происходящих в стране. То, что можно было сказать на эти темы «вообще», уже сказано. Пора, давно пора от общих рассуждений, от общих повторений того, что центризм ведет к термидору, от споров о том, на сколько процентов термидор неизбежен, перейти к конкретному изучению того, какими путями современная политика подготавливает возможную победу термидора. Это конкретное изучение требует больше работы, больше размышлений и больше усидчивости, чем политическая трескотня на общие темы, чем бесконечное повторение в разных вариантах общих мест, — но только на этом пути можно продвигаться в сторону большего понимания того, что происходит в стране. Я больше, чем кто бы то ни был, отдаю себе отчет во всех слабых сторонах моей работы. Я не говорю уже о том, что у нас далеко нет тех материалов, какие нужны были бы для такого рода работы. Но даже и при тех материалах, какие у нас имеются, такая работа непосильна для одного человека. Я знаю, что далеко не все достаточно убедительно, знаю и то, что многое явится здесь спорным. Это может иметь место и в силу мо-

их ошибок, и в силу того, что многого совсем не удалось коснуться, что по многим вопросам, требующим специального изучения, пришлось ограничиться лишь несколькими замечаниями, и в силу того, что часто приходилось касаться лишь экономической стороны дела. Меньше всего я претендую на то, что я полностью справился с делом конкретного анализа или что мне удалось преодолеть все связанные с таким анализом трудности. Ставя себе в первую очередь задачу — выяснить конкретно ряд вопросов для себя (и, надеюсь, и для других), я хотел бы думать, что эта работа даст некоторым товарищам толчок к работе в том же направлении.

### Коротко о XVI съезде

О съезде собственно многого не скажешь. Задача, которая была поставлена съезду, выполнена на 100%. Съезд, правда, не только не разрешил, но даже не поставил ни одной из задач, стоящих перед страной и революцией. Но такой задачи перед ним и не было. Задача XVI съезда заключалась в том, чтобы своим авторитетом закрепить организованные «достижения» сталинской фракции, закрепить аппарат над партией, сталинскую группу над аппаратом и самого Сталина, как признанного вождя, который венчает всю аппаратную машину, удобно обосновавшуюся на шее партии. Отсюда грандиозный разрыв, грандиозные ножницы между тем, что происходило на съезде, и тем, что происходит в стране. Задачи организационной механики оттеснили политические задачи. Исходя из этой оргмеханики, Сталин не мог поставить ни одного из действительно стоящих перед революцией вопросов. Исходя из этой же оргмеханики, правые не посмели поставить эти вопросы. Съезд прошел мимо жизни — это первый вывод, это первое чувство, которое испытывал всякий при чтении отчетов. Другой вывод заключается в том, что этот съезд явился одним из важнейших этапов по пути дальнейшей (если это только возможно) бонапартизации пар-

*The beginning of Rakovsky's article, "At the Congress and in the Nation," written from 27 July to 7 August 1930, and published in the Bulletin of the Opposition, № 25/26, November-December 1931, pp. 9-32.*

The political meaning of the Sixteenth Congress was disclosed in an article by Khristian Rakovsky, "At the Congress and in the Nation," written in July-August 1930. Rakovsky said:

“The task of the Sixteenth Congress consisted in affirming with its authority the organized ‘achievements’ of the Stalin faction, affirming the apparatus over the party, the Stalin group over the apparatus, and Stalin himself, as the acknowledged leader, who crowns the entire apparatus that has comfortably established itself at the party’s expense ... This congress was one of the most important stages along the path of the further (if that is even possible) Bonapartization of the party. Not only is the party already excluded from deciding political problems, but such decisions are not entrusted even to the carefully screened and selected congress. Unconditional approval retroactively of a general line devoid of any concrete content cannot signify anything other than an approval beforehand, just as unconditional, of any policy, any shift in any direction.”<sup>26</sup>

As the entire subsequent experience of the country showed, such blind endorsement of general “lines” (“the construction of communism in twenty years” under Khrushchev, “the perfecting of developed socialism” under Brezhnev, Gorbachev’s “perestroika” [reconstruction], or Yeltsin’s “course toward reforms”) served as a social-psychological mechanism of confirming authoritarian power that has a tendency to develop into totalitarianism, into dictatorial forms of rule.

Rakovsky noted that, for a future historian, the transcripts of the Sixteenth Congress would become the best illustration of the mores of the “epoch of reconstruction.” In them are fixed “a worthy symbol of the entire contemporary regime.” [One sees]:

“a savage picture of unrestrained bureaucrats and apparatchiks, competing with each other in hooting and mockery directed at an opponent (the rightists) who has surrendered his weapon and whose back is against the wall... What is most disgusting here is that this competition at hurling abuse at a transgressor crawling on his belly is the price being paid by bureaucrats for their own well-being: who is without sin, who is guaranteed that tomorrow he will not become a redemptive sacrifice to preserve the prestige of the general line? It is hard to say who has lost his feeling of self-dignity more, those who, to the accompaniment of whistling and hooting, have submissively bowed their heads and allowed insults to pass by their ears in hope of a better future, or those who also in hope of a better future have hurled these insults, knowing in advance that their opponent will retreat. At the Fifteenth Congress, the apparatchiks could not allow themselves this behavior. At the Fifteenth Congress one felt the breath of history, one felt that something serious was happening, that the party was experiencing a tragedy of some kind. Now they have tried to repeat the same thing with regard to the rightists, but the second time what has occurred, as always happens, has been a pathetic farce.”<sup>27</sup>

The fundamental difference between the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Congresses was this: the first of these crushed a formal opposition that had continued to defend its views; the second had crushed an opposition that refused organizational form, was already broken, and was incapable of any resistance.

A congress resolution crowned the demise of the Bukharin group by indicating that the latter had opposed the general line of the party with “an openly opportunistic line,” which “leads to capitulation before the country’s kulak-capitalistic elements.” The “right deviationists” were declared “objectively, agents of the kulaks.” The resolution confirmed that

“opportunists of all kinds, especially the rightists, are employing a new maneuver, expressed in a formal recognition of their mistakes and a formal agreement with the party’s general line, but not backing up their acknowledgment with working and fighting for the general line, which in fact signifies only the transition from open struggle against the party to a concealed one, or waiting for a more beneficial moment for renewing attacks on the party.”

Demanding “a declaration of the most ruthless war against double-dealing and deception of this kind,” the resolution warned that those acknowledging their mistakes must prove the sincerity of these confessions “through active defense of the party’s general line. ... Non-fulfilment of this demand must bring in its wake the most decisive organizational measures.”<sup>28</sup>

All this signified an unequivocal indication to the “rightists” that their slightest disagreement with any future action by the Stalin leadership would lead to their complete banishment from the political arena. Only under this condition were Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy left at the Sixteenth Congress as members in the Central Committee. Rykov, the only member of the “troika” who retained his post and place in the Politburo, was removed from the Politburo six months after the congress and replaced at his post as chairman of the Sovnarkom by Molotov.

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- [1.](#) A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiia vlasti*, pp. 180–181.
- [2.](#) In 1933, Uglanov wrote in a statement sent to the Central Control Commission: “Throughout 1929, we tried to organize cadres of our supporters and take actions against the CC. We placed special emphasis on strengthening the Right Opposition at the Industrial Academy” (*Neizvestnaia Rossiia. XX vek*, Moscow, 1992, p. 61).
- [3.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1990, № 2, p. 98.
- [4.](#) Ibid.
- [5.](#) *Pravda*, 9 June 1930.
- [6.](#) *XVI s’ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol’shevikov). Stenograficheskii otchet*. M., 1930, p. 248.
- [7.](#) *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 3.
- [8.](#) *XVI s’ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol’shevikov). Stenograficheskii otchet*. M., 1930, p. 159.
- [9.](#) Ibid., p. 194.
- [10.](#) Ibid., p. 203.
- [11.](#) Ibid., pp. 144, 148.
- [12.](#) Ibid., p. 363.
- [13.](#) Ibid., p. 90.
- [14.](#) Ibid., p. 745.
- [15.](#) Ibid., p. 213.
- [16.](#) Ibid., p. 256.
- [17.](#) Ibid., p. 288.
- [18.](#) Ibid., pp. 288–289.
- [19.](#) Ibid., p. 246.
- [20.](#) Ibid., p. 254.
- [21.](#) Ibid., p. 202.
- [22.](#) Ibid., p. 325.
- [23.](#) Ibid., p. 109.
- [24.](#) Ibid., p. 326.
- [25.](#) Ibid., pp. 75, 279.
- [26.](#) *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1931, № 25–26, pp. 9–10.
- [27.](#) Ibid., p. 10.
- [28.](#) *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniiakh*, vol. 5, pp. 131–132.



# 19. Stalin's "Battle on Two Fronts"

At the Sixteenth Congress in 1930, Stalin devoted significant attention to a criticism of "Trotskyism," while remaining unabashed at the contradictions in his interpretation of the "Trotskyist danger." On the one hand, he declared that "we have long since routed and tossed out the Trotskyist group, as an opposition," and now we are dealing with simply the struggle "against remnants of Trotskyism in the party, with vestiges of Trotskyist theory." On the other hand, he confirmed that Trotskyism was not only alive, but that it "usually ends its attacks against the right deviationists ... in a *bloc* with them as undisguised capitulators."<sup>1</sup>

On the one hand, Stalin evaluated the "left deviations" in the kolkhoz movement as "a certain, to be sure, unconscious, attempt to revive among us the traditions of Trotskyism in practice, to resurrect the Trotskyist attitude toward the middle peasantry."<sup>2</sup> (In recent years, precisely this Stalinist version has been seized upon by many journalists and writers). On the other hand, he declared, in his characteristic tone, that in conditions of the reconstruction period, "the Trotskyists, from the standpoint of tempos, are the most extreme minimalists and the most wretched capitulators."<sup>3</sup>

To substantiate the latter theory, Stalin contrasted the figures of the growth of industrial production in 1927–1930 with the prognoses made by Trotsky in 1925. These rough figures, called by Stalin "the Trotskyist theory of the descending curve," were the conclusion drawn by Trotsky about the lowering of the tempos of development of Soviet industry after completing the restoration of the nation's economy and the transition to expanded reproduction on the basis of socialist accumulation. However, after this, Trotsky said that under conditions of planned industrialization, Soviet manufacturing could achieve tempos unobtainable under capitalism. The figures of the growth of industry in 1930 (22 percent) and in 1931 (20 percent) coincided with the coefficients anticipated by Trotsky five years earlier.

Stalin resorted to arguments about the "narrowly pedantic sagacity" of the "Trotskyists" in connection with his proposal to raise the tempo of industrial development to 32 percent in 1929/30, and to 47 percent in the 1930/31 economic year.<sup>4</sup>

After the congress, Stalin's propaganda apparatus continued to disgorge embittered invective against Trotsky, which was unalterably met with a rebuff from the outcast on Prinkipo Island. More effective, of course, were the further attacks on the "rightists," especially Bukharin, whom Stalin and his henchmen continued to accuse of "double-dealing." Bukharin responded to these charges with complaints to Stalin about the "unprecedented derision" and "slander" to which he was being subjected. On 14 October 1930 he wrote:

"Koba. After our conversation by telephone I immediately left work in a state of despair. Not because you 'frightened' me — you will not frighten me and you will not intimidate me. But because those monstrous accusations which you threw at me clearly point to the existence of some kind of diabolical, vile and base *provocation*, which you believe, on which you construct

your policy, and *which will lead to no good*, even if you were to destroy me physically just as successfully as you are destroying me politically.”



*Stalin and Bukharin*

Trying in vain to convince Stalin of his loyalty, and thereby to preserve remnants of his human dignity, Bukharin continued:

“I consider your accusations to be monstrous, insane slander, savage, and in the final analysis, unwise ... The *truth* is that, despite all the attacks on me, I stand shoulder to shoulder with everyone, although every single day I am pushed away. ... Is it that I don’t lick your ass or write articles for you *à la* Pyatakov,<sup>5</sup> or does this make me an ‘advocate of terror?’ Then just say so! God, what kind of hellish madness is happening right now! And you, instead of an explanation, respond with malice toward a man who is filled with *one* thought: to help in some way, to pull the wagon with everyone else, but not to turn into a sycophant; there are many of those and they are destroying us.”<sup>6</sup>

Of course, complaints of this kind, showing Bukharin’s extreme demoralization, could arouse nothing in Stalin except a feeling of satisfaction and a desire to obtain further humiliation from the dispirited Bukharin. On 20 November 1930, Bukharin issued a new declaration of repentance in *Pravda* in an article edited by Kaganovich. In this statement, Bukharin once again confessed his mistakes, expressed full agreement with all party resolutions stigmatizing the “right deviation,” and condemned any attempts at a “hidden struggle” against the party leadership. On the next day, the newspapers *Trud* [Labor] and *Za industrializatsiiu* [For Industrialization] published articles characterizing this statement as “an act of double-dealing.” Only after this event did Stalin decide to play the role of a well-meaning and impartial arbiter. On 22 November a special decree of the

Central Committee was published which condemned these newspaper articles against Bukharin and made a positive assessment of his statement.

Insofar as it had not been possible to drive the submissively repentant leaders of the “rightists” from the party, as had been done with the “Trotskyists,” Stalin concentrated his efforts at isolating them from their closest assistants and collaborators. On 22 September 1930 he wrote to Molotov:

“We must dismiss Rykov and Shmidt and drive out all their bureaucratic, consulting and secretarial apparatus ... You must replace Rykov at the post of PredSNK [Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars] and PredSTO [Chairman of the Council of Labor and Defense]. For the time being, all this is *between us*.”<sup>7</sup>

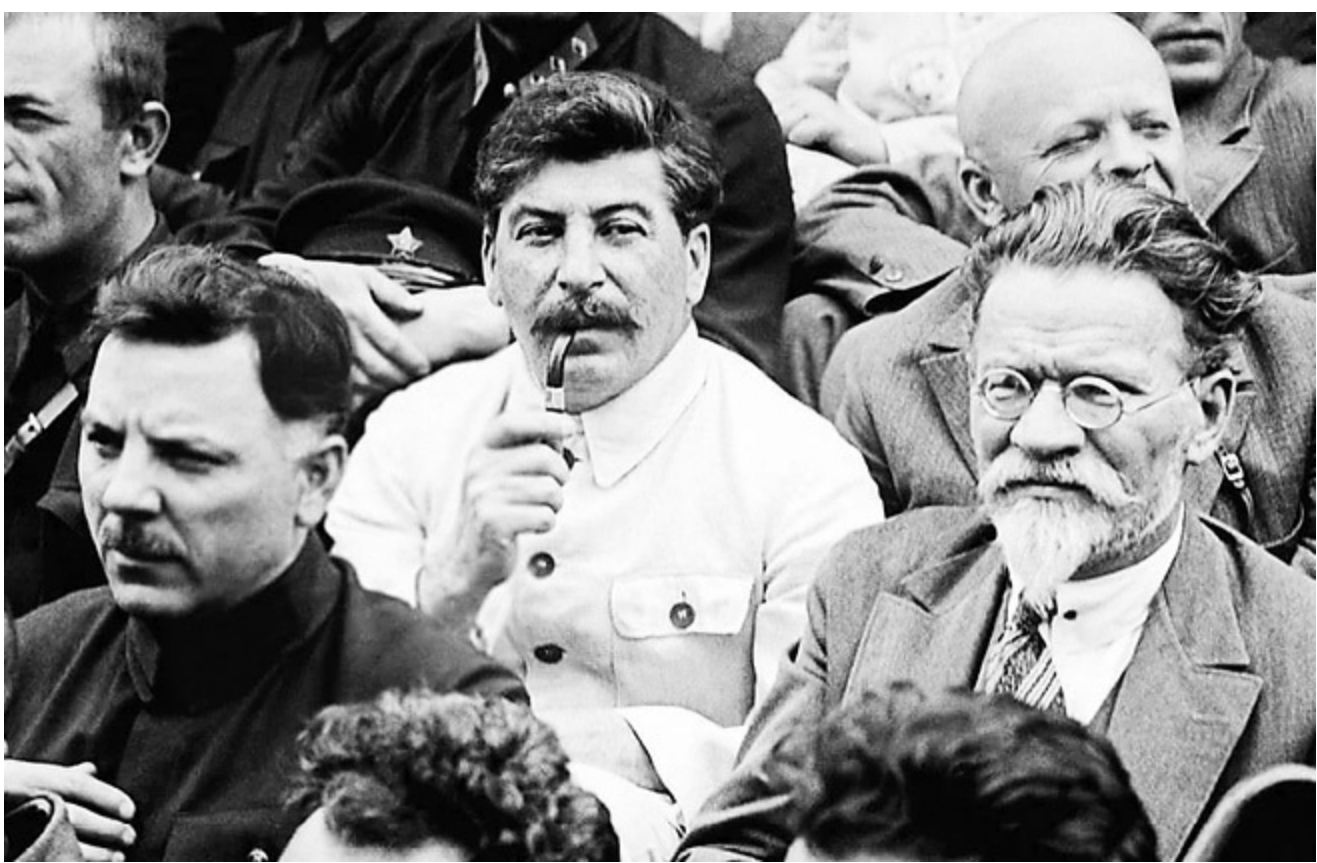
The realization of this plan in December 1930 contributed to the execution of Stalin’s parallel scheme — the final liquidation of any independence among the leading state bodies.

From the very beginning of the public persecution of the “rightists,” Trotsky saw this as an obscene farce undermining the party’s authority. In an article, “Lesson of the Capitulations (Obituary Reflections),” he turned special attention to the fact that open attacks on the “troika” had unfolded after their “rout.”

“The party learns in passing, already at a moment of denouement, that the head of the Comintern, the head of the government and the head of the trade unions for one and a half years ‘played with the fate of the party and revolution’ (literally!), ‘speculated on catastrophe’ (literally!) — and did all this somewhere in a bureaucratic underground. ... Only after Rykov had ritually capitulated, which, it would seem, generally excluded the necessity of further struggle, only from this moment Rykov, and the entire troika along with him, are subjected to particularly unbridled public abuse before the entire party, the population of the country, and generally of all mankind. The party was absolutely not needed for the struggle against the ‘conspiracy’ of Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsy. The party was assured that there generally is no struggle at all. But after the behind-the-scenes victory over the rightists, the party was shown three political scalps: look, this is what the general secretariat does and will do with all those who stand in its way.”<sup>8</sup>

Recalling the thesis that Stalin advanced at the Sixteenth Congress in 1930: “the Trotskyist group is now an anti-proletarian and anti-Soviet counter-revolutionary group, assiduously informing the bourgeoisie about the affairs of our party,”<sup>9</sup> Trotsky wrote:

“What more information, we ask on our part, does the world bourgeoisie need beyond the material which is given by official Stalinist agents and Stalin himself, most of all? At the congress they speak of the chairman of the Sovnarkom as a saboteur; they stigmatize yesterday’s leader of the Comintern as an agent of the bourgeoisie. For the amusement of young fellows they remove yesterday’s leader of the trade unions and yesterday’s leader of the Moscow organization, who had cleansed it over the course of several years of ‘Trotskyism.’”<sup>10</sup>



*Voroshilov, Stalin and Kalinin at the Sixteenth Party Congress, 1930.*

Trotsky assessed the reprisals against the “rightists” as an indicator that “the system of bureaucratism has become a system of *endless palace coups* which are the only means by which it can maintain itself.”<sup>11</sup> The Stalin group cannot allow the slightest opposition to its decisions even within the CC and Politburo.

“Any disagreement with the leadership, i.e., with the militarized Stalin faction, any attempt at criticism, any proposal that has not been reviewed beforehand by the upper echelon, leads to a swift organizational pogrom, which is carried out wordlessly, like a pantomime, after which follows the ‘theoretical’ liquidation, resembling a ritual funeral dirge performed by lazy sextons and psalm readers from among the red professors.”<sup>12</sup>

The liquidation of any criticism, even within the ruling higher-ups, shows that “the bureaucratic regime has happily descended to the principle of the infallibility of the leadership, which is the necessary supplement to its virtual unaccountability.” In this situation, the leadership can no longer be understood as the Central Committee, or even the Politburo. And only by tradition does one speak of the infallibility of the CC, which has ceased to be any kind of stable collective. From it are ceaselessly expelled all those who have dared to express their own opinion, let alone dispute one of Stalin’s judgments. As for the members of the Politburo, “nobody particularly takes them seriously, which, by the way, is how they see themselves.” When people talk of the party leadership, they have in mind exclusively Stalin. “This is by no means being concealed; on the contrary, it is being emphasized in every possible way. 1929 was the year of his official coronation as the infallible leader, answerable to no one.”<sup>13</sup> The Sixteenth Party Congress completed this process once and for all.



- [1.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 354, 357 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, pp. 364, 367].
- [2.](#) Ibid., p. 357 [Ibid., p. 368].
- [3.](#) Ibid., p. 349 [Ibid., p. 360].
- [4.](#) Ibid., p. 351 [Ibid., pp. 361–362].
- [5.](#) Apparently, Bukharin had in mind the extremely servile article written by Pyatakov on the occasion of Stalin's fiftieth birthday.
- [6.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, № 5, p. 70.
- [7.](#) *Kommunist*, 1990, № 11, p. 105.
- [8.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 13 [Cf.: "Lessons of the Capitulations," *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 82].
- [9.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, p. 354 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, p. 364].
- [10.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1930, № 14, p. 4 [Cf.: "Who Will Prevail?" *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 341–342].
- [11.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1930, № 12–13, p. 2 [Cf.: "Toward the Sixteenth Congress of the CPSU," *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 254].
- [12.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1930, № 11, p. 8 [Cf.: "Toward Capitalism or Socialism?" *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 205].
- [13.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1930, № 12–13, p. 3 [Cf.: "Toward the Sixteenth Congress of the CPSU," *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 257].

## 20. The “Right-Ultraleft Bloc”

Despite Stalin’s apparent omnipotence, his absolute power encountered noticeable obstacles among both the working-class masses, as well as the old and new inner-party oppositions. One of the attempts at organized resistance to this absolute power was the meeting of Podolsk workers with representatives of the largest Moscow factories, that took place on 19 September 1930. The meeting sent a resolution to Kalinin, Rykov and Voroshilov, whom the workers still saw as people capable of withstanding “Stalin’s unrestrained, autocratic rule.” It stated that his rule had led the country to a situation much worse than that at the height of the Civil War. The workers demanded that “in order to preserve the power of the proletariat, ... Stalin must immediately be removed from participating in affairs of leading the country ... He must be tried by the state for innumerable crimes committed by him against the proletarian masses.” The resolution contained a warning of possible “unwanted disturbances, with our direct appeal to the masses,” if there was no “immediate change of policy in the spirit of genuine, not Stalinist, Leninism.”<sup>1</sup>



*Sergei Ivanovich Syrtsov*  
(1893–1937)



*Vissarion (Beso) Lominadze*  
(1897–1935)

A reflection of similar moods that had seized even significant layers of the party and state apparatus, was the emergence of a new oppositional grouping headed by candidate-member of the Politburo and chairman of the Sovnarkom of the RSFSR, Sergei Syrtsov, and the first secretary of the Zakavkaz [Transcaucasus] Krai Committee, Vissarion (Beso) Lominadze. Syrtsov was joined by a group of officials from central state institutions, and Lominadze, by several organizers and leaders of the Komsomol who had previously worked under his leadership in the Communist Youth International

(Shatskin, Chemodanov, Chaplin and others).

One may get an idea of Syrtsov's position from his report at a party conference at the Institute of Red Professors, published in the journal *Bolshevik*. In it he sharply condemned empiricism in politics (this term was widely used by Trotsky in describing the unsystematic and unplanned nature of Stalin's "general line") and official optimism, "preferring to look at everything through rose-tinted glasses and to pull the wool over other people's eyes." Syrtsov noted:

"There is, among some of our officials, a tendency to replace control of complex economic relations with the crudest administrative assaults, flowing from the habit of deciding every problem empirically: 'let's see what comes out of this, and if life hits us in the forehead, then we will conclude that we should have done otherwise' ... After all, if you bother with a peasant for a long time, trying to convince him or working over practical problems with him, they will look at you and tell you to ride around a neighboring region, not wasting time on these 'trivial matters.' So why spend so much time with the peasant? Drop him a hint about Solovki, or about the way they will take away his provisions; or force him to vote according to the principle: 'Whoever is for collectivization is for Soviet power, whoever is against collectivization is against Soviet power' ... We would incorrectly understand leadership tasks if we were to tolerate excesses now, and then come down hard on the lower-level officials and make them responsible for all those mistakes. In hindsight, everyone will figure out the facts of all the bungling, we have to be able to forestall the bungling."<sup>2</sup>

Unlike Syrtsov, who had occupied a position close to the "rightists," Lominadze in the 1920s had advocated "leftist" ideas, trying, according to Ordzhonikidze, to join his friends in playing "a special role in the party: to spur people on."<sup>3</sup> In 1929, for defending the right of communists to have a critical attitude to directives coming from above, Lominadze and Shatskin received party reprimands and were assigned to low-level work in the provinces. However, having enjoyed Ordzhonikidze's support, Lominadze was confirmed as leader of the Zakavkaz party organization, and at the Sixteenth Congress of the VKP(b) he was elected a member of the Central Committee.

Only during the years of the "Great Terror" did Stalin receive information that Lominadze had often shared his oppositional views with Ordzhonikidze. In a speech at the February-March Plenum of the Central Committee in 1937, Stalin announced that in 1926–28, Ordzhonikidze already knew about Lominadze's mistakes "more than any of us." In support of this claim, Stalin declared that "Sergo received one very bad, unpleasant, and non-party letter from Lominadze." As followed from what Stalin said, Ordzhonikidze told him about this letter "of an anti-party character," adding that the latter had given his word to Lominadze not to pass on its contents. After this, Stalin had said to Ordzhonikidze:

"If you hide this thing from the CC and defend Lominadze, he will hope in the future that he can allow certain mistakes in the future against the CC ... but then he might get involved in something big, and if he gets involved in something big, we will utterly destroy him, there will be nothing left of him."<sup>4</sup>

Khrushchev recounted in his memoirs that Stalin often returned to this episode, expressing his outrage that Ordzhonikidze had given Lominadze his word of honor not to tell of the latter's views.<sup>5</sup>

One of the oldest Georgian Bolsheviks, Mamiia Orakhelashvili, recalled in testimony given in 1937, how Lominadze had sharply criticized Stalin in the presence of Ordzhonikidze and other Georgian communists. The following is recorded in his testimony (accompanied, of course, by ritual "criminal" epithets added by his interrogators):

“In my presence in the apartment of Sergo Ordzhonikidze, Beso Lominadze, after a number of counter-revolutionary outbursts directed at the party leadership, unleashed an extraordinarily offensive and hooligan attack on Stalin. To my surprise, in response to this counter-revolutionary insolence coming from Lominadze, Ordzhonikidze turned to me with a smile and said: ‘Have a look at him!’ After this he continued his conversation with Lominadze in amicable tones.”<sup>6</sup>



*Sergo Ordzhonikidze*

Evidently, Lominadze was convinced that Ordzhonikidze would limit himself to a passive reception of the criticism of Stalin’s leadership, but would not express a readiness to engage in an active struggle against Stalin. Lominadze did meet such readiness from Syrtsov, who called Stalin “a dim-witted person who was leading the country to its death.”<sup>7</sup> Thus a bloc was formed whose participants prepared in the fall of 1930 to criticize Stalin’s economic policy and party regime at the next plenum of the Central Committee.<sup>8</sup> These questions were discussed during meetings held by Syrtsov and Lominadze with their co-thinkers. Having received information about these meetings, Stalin accused Syrtsov of “factional activity” at a Politburo session and had the “Case of Syrtsov-

Lominadze” sent to the Central Control Commission. In October-November, people in Syrtsov’s closest circle were expelled from the party and arrested. On 1 December the Central Committee and Central Control Commission passed a decree “On the Factional Work of Syrtsov, Lominadze and others.” It told of “slandorous methods,” consisting of the fact that Syrtsov had called reports “about the successes of socialist construction” nonsense, and Lominadze had claimed that what reigned in the apparatus was “an attitude like that of a feudal lord toward the needs of workers and peasants.”<sup>9</sup>

Syrtsov, Lominadze and Shatskin, declared to be the organizers of a “right-ultraleft bloc,” were expelled from central party bodies. Such a decision was made for the first time, in violation of Party Statutes, without a review of their case at a plenum of the CC and CCC.

Syrtsov was sent to the provinces for economic work, and in 1937 shared the fate of all former oppositionists.<sup>10</sup>

Lominadze was appointed party organizer at a Moscow aviation factory and, in 1933, along with other officials in the aviation industry, was even awarded the Order of Lenin. While he was in Moscow, he participated in organizing a bloc of all anti-Stalinist groupings (see Chapter 42). Although this side of his activity remained hidden from the CCC and OGPU, he continued to be persecuted as a former oppositionist. In connection with this, Ordzhonikidze turned to Khrushchev, as secretary of the Moscow Committee, asking that Lominadze “be tormented less.” As a fervent Stalinist who had been promoted on the basis of persecuting the oppositions, Khrushchev replied:



“Comrade Sergo, you know after all that Lominadze is an extremely active oppositionist and, essentially, is even an organizer of the opposition. Clearly defined actions are now being demanded of him, but he responds vaguely and provides grounds for criticism of himself.”<sup>11</sup>



*Left to right: Lazar Abramovich Shatskin (1902–1937)*

*Nikolai Pavlovich Chaplin  
(1902–1938)*

*Vasily Tarasovich Chemodanov  
(1903–1937)*

*Leaders and organizers of the Komsomol who worked closely with Beso Lominadze and were executed by Stalin in 1937–1938.*

Apparently, with Ordzhonikidze’s support, Lominadze was transferred to the post of secretary of the Magnitogorsk Party Committee, thus proving to be one of the few former oppositionists who were returned to leading party work. At the beginning of 1935, when the “Kirov” wave of repressions began and Lominadze’s close companions were arrested, he committed suicide on the eve of his inevitable arrest.

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1. *Ogonëk*, 1989, № 23, p. 11.

2. *Bol’shevik*, 1930, № 5, pp. 44–45, 50–51, 54.

3. *Kommunist*, 1991, № 13, p. 57.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57.

5. *Znamia*, 1989, № 9, p. 134.

6. *Beriia: Konets kar’ery*, M., 1991, p. 378.

7. *Oni ne molchali*, M., 1991, p. 134.

8. According to information held by correspondents of the *Bulletin of the Opposition*, Lominadze also tried to gather a group of his co-thinkers in the Caucasus, in order to act at the next party conference as an entire delegation against Stalin.

9. *VKP(b) v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s’ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov Ts K*, Part II, M., 1936, pp. 668–669.

10. Syrtsov was shot on 10 September 1937 in Moscow (*translator*).

11. *Voprosy istorii*, 1990, № 4, p. 80.

# 21. The Social and Class Meaning of the “Great Breakthrough”

The shift, on the eve of the 1930s (as well as in subsequent years), of many old Bolsheviks who had never before belonged to any opposition, to attempted struggles against Stalin, was caused most of all by sharp changes in the words and deeds of Stalin himself. To thinking members of the party, it was clear that everything Stalin had said and written in 1923–1927 was in striking contradiction to what he had been saying and doing in recent years. Because of this, many participants in the events of those years came to the conclusion that Stalin had conducted “correct” policy until 1928, and then had suddenly changed to “incorrect” policy. This superficial conclusion is also shared by many contemporary historians. However, a serious analysis of the social and class relations of the 1920s and 1930s shows the inner logic of Stalin’s policy, and more broadly, the inner logic of Soviet Thermidor.

After the introduction of the NEP, the concept of “Thermidor” was widely used in the emigré press. SR and Menshevik ideologists understood Thermidor to be the restoration of capitalist relations, the prologue of which, in their opinion, was the NEP. In 1923–1927, they felt that the ruling faction was conducting a realistic policy of adapting to the interests of the strong peasant farmer. Standing behind him was the resurgent NEP-bourgeoisie, meaning that the ruling faction was paving the way for the country’s inescapable capitalist development. Similar views were held by the more right-wing emigré current, “Changing Landmarks,” headed by Nikolai Ustrialov, which endorsed the policy conducted by Stalin and Bukharin in the fight against the Left Opposition.

In his book *Stalin*, Trotsky stressed that, by itself, the introduction of NEP by no means heralded the fatal onset of Thermidor; but “NEP prepared, without any doubt, serious elements of a future Thermidor. It revived and injected life into the petty bourgeoisie in both town and country, increasing its appetites and unreasonable demands.”<sup>1</sup>

Both the Bolshevik Party and its opponents unambiguously perceived the NEP as a certain rebirth of capitalist relations. However, they each recognized that political power remained in the same hands that had carried out the October Revolution. This power restricted the development of capitalist relations with limitations that did not undermine the social and economic foundations of the new social structure: nationalization of the land, industry and banking sector; the monopoly of foreign trade and the planning element in managing the economy. For this reason, NEP did not signify the full liberalization of economic life which is possible “if products are freely exchanged on the market and the state has no occasion to intrude in the basic sphere of human relations.”<sup>2</sup> Not allowing the free play of market forces, which inevitably necessitates the growth of spontaneous social differentiation, was explained not only by the goals which the Bolshevik Party set before itself. Restrictions of

market freedom were implemented during the First World War and after it in all the warring countries. In conditions of a sharp decline in production and, consequently, of consumption, the state is compelled to intervene with its regulations in economic relations and even to apply force in order to subject market forces to limitations directed against their interests. A result of this process is the increasing role of the bureaucracy as an organ directing distributive relations. In the young Soviet republic, this process halted the withering away of the state that accompanies genuinely socialist development, and brought the bureaucracy to the forefront of political life as an independent force, regulating relations between classes. This force became the main subjective agent of Soviet Thermidor; as a result, it developed not in the direction of the restoration of the capitalist system, but toward the bureaucratic degeneration of the political regime.

The coincidence in time of the NEP and the crushing of the Left Opposition, which opened the road to the consolidation of Stalinism, is of course far from accidental. NEP was not a conflict-free chapter in the history of Soviet society. But the causes of Soviet Thermidor were not rooted in the rise of social differentiation anticipated by the Bolshevik strategy of the new economic policy. More dangerous and long-lasting turned out to be the differentiation, materially based upon the bureaucracy's privileges, that were introduced step-by-step by Stalin and his allies of that time.

The crystallization of a new layer of professionals in the regime, that occurred under Stalin's leadership, became the precondition of Soviet Thermidor, i.e., of the social degeneration of the party and the Soviet state. Possessing an unsurpassed ability to play on the "lower" strings of human nature, Stalin unerringly sensed that the shift from the bivouac-like everyday life of the civil war to a settled and egalitarian way of life would give birth, in the milieu of the bureaucracy, to a yearning for the material benefits of life, for conveniences and comfort. While continuing to live relatively modestly himself, at least superficially (the many dachas, extravagant banquets and drinking bouts would become a constant attribute of Stalin's way of life only in the 1930s), Stalin encouraged the self-interested strivings of the bureaucracy "to cast off the Spartan limitations of the first period of the revolution."<sup>3</sup> He distributed the most attractive posts and determined the degree of material benefits which a bureaucrat might receive from holding his post. He subordinated this entire bureaucratic mechanism to the task of creating a privileged caste, ever more alienated from the people and striving to hold the masses in submission to their power. The political and everyday degeneration of the ruling layer changed its mores and mentality (its way of thinking) and allowed Stalin to gain ever growing confidence and to display ever greater ruthlessness in the struggle against his opponents. "Stalin systematically corrupted the apparatus. In response, the apparatus removed the bridle from its leader."<sup>4</sup>

A reaction to these processes was a differentiation in the ranks of the ruling layer, the separation from it of a significant segment that fought against the degeneration within its own milieu. The Left Opposition was headed by representatives "of the same privileged bureaucracy who are abandoning (its) ranks in order to tie their fate to the fate of the sansculottes, impoverished proletarians, and village poor."<sup>5</sup>

Rejection of the pivotal socialist idea of social equality — for the sake of defending one's own selfish interests — became the fundamental social program of the bureaucracy in its irreconcilable struggle against the Left Opposition. Success in this struggle was facilitated by the fact that it proceeded under conditions of NEP, which by its very nature presumed the emergence of profound social and material differences. The bureaucracy's line of perpetuating its existence, of reinforcing and justifying its monopoly on power and its growing material privileges, was initially combined with serious concessions to upper layers in the countryside. Laws adopted in 1925 legalizing the leasing of land and the hiring of labor in agriculture contributed to the liberalization of economic relations to a significantly greater degree than had been anticipated in the initial conceptions of NEP.

Such an expansion of NEP intensified the contradiction between two coexisting modes of the economy: the socialist, embodied in the nationalized industry and state monopoly of foreign trade; and the capitalist, whose bearers were the new bourgeoisie — the NEPmen in the city and kulaks in the village. "According to the conditions of its life, its conservatism and its political sympathies, the bureaucracy gravitated as an enormous mass to the new petty bourgeoisie."<sup>6</sup>

The struggle against equality constituted the social base of the tacit alliance between the bureaucracy and the higher-ups of the NEP petty bourgeoisie. This alliance was masked by slogans about defending the interests of the peasants as free commodity-producers and sellers of their products. The offensive of the ruling faction against the Left Opposition had proceeded under these watchwords in 1925–1927. Such slogans met with support from elements longing for the complete restoration of capitalist relations, but who understood that they could not achieve immediate success in this endeavor. Therefore they "needed to pass through a period of defending the peasantry."<sup>7, 8</sup>

The course toward increasing material differences, camouflaged by demagogic attacks on "(wage-)leveling," became the axis of the bureaucracy's social program. Most clearly this course was defended ideologically in Stalin's concluding words at the Fourteenth Party Congress<sup>9</sup> in 1925 and in Bukharin's work, "The Path to Socialism and the Worker-Peasant Alliance."<sup>10</sup>

In revealing how various layers of Soviet society were influenced by "the frenzied and furious struggle against egalitarianism," Trotsky referred to the play "Fear," by Aleksandr Afinogenov, where one of the characters — a scientist studying stimuli of human behavior — said that "the common stimulus of behavior for 80 percent of all those studied is fear." The remaining 20 percent were newly promoted workers, who had nothing to fear. Noting that accusing the opposition of aspiring to introduce immediate equality was "the most powerful weapon in Stalin's hands," Trotsky wrote that the "20 percent of the newly promoted heard Stalin to be the voice of their leader, while the 80 percent who were frightened dared not raise their voice."<sup>11</sup> In Trotsky's estimation, this was a "masterful maneuver" by Stalin, which drew the majority of the bureaucracy to his side.

However, the operation of the laws of private commodity production, the strengthening of the positions of the petty bourgeoisie, would inevitably have to pose the question formulated by Lenin: who will prevail? Initially the bureaucracy did not want to infringe upon the social interests of those layers who, at an accelerated tempo, had begun to engage in primitive capitalist accumulation.



However it very soon became clear that the kulak, petty trader and petty manufacturer aspired to the full restoration of capitalism, i.e., to the liquidation of the social foundations laid by the October Revolution — the nationalization of the means of production, the banks and the land.

This aspiration revealed the ever more opposed social interests of the NEP bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy. A liberal economic regime on foundations of private property leads to the spontaneous concentration of wealth in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The privileges, however, of the bureaucracy do not flow from the automatic activity of market relations.

“The bureaucracy appropriates for itself that part of the national income which it is able to secure with its strength, or its authority, or its direct intrusion into economic relations. When it comes to the surplus product of the nation, the bureaucracy and the petty bourgeoisie are direct competitors. ... Controlling the surplus product opens the road to power, because the bureaucracy had to look doubly with a jealous eye at the process of enriching the upper layers of the countryside and of the urban petty bourgeoisie.”<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, concessions to the new bourgeoisie on the part of the bureaucracy were maintained for much less time than their initiators, and Stalin most of all, had foreseen. Further liberalization of economic relations threatened not only the socialist foundations of Soviet society, but also the social base of the bureaucracy itself. For the bureaucracy, guarding the new property relations was “a matter of life and death, for these were the social origins of its dominant role.”<sup>13</sup> For this reason the bureaucracy was forced to enter into struggle against the petty bourgeoisie for the sake of reinforcing its monopoly right to dispose of the entire power and the entire wealth of the nation.

In 1926–1927, the Left Opposition stressed that the essence of Thermidor, which was threatening to sweep away the gains of the October Revolution, was social in character. Its essence was the crystallization of “new privileged layers, the creation of a new substratum for the economically dominant class. There were two claimants to such a role: the petty bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy itself.”<sup>14</sup>

Fearing that the growth of economic power of the petty bourgeoisie might lead to Thermidor in the form of the direct restoration of capitalist relations, the Left Opposition in this period advanced the slogan of a struggle “against the NEPman, kulak and bureaucrat.” It considered that the first two class elements might “trample” the still relatively small-numbered working class and seize class domination in Soviet society. This objective contradiction was captured by A. Avtorkhanov in his own way, who wrote that “Russia, having become the Russia of NEP, was about to take one more step, to make itself capitalist. Here, Trotsky stood in the way.”<sup>15</sup> Although Avtorkhanov is on shaky ground in ascribing to “all Russia” the aspirations of its neo-bourgeois layers, he correctly conveys the social meaning of the struggle between the ruling faction and the Left Opposition. Of course, the leaders of the rightists, who subjectively stood on positions of a socialist alternative, did not assess the social and class processes that were unfolding in the country in the same spirit as Avtorkhanov. Only on the threshold of perestroika’s capitalist restoration were the arguments of the latter adopted to arm the “democrats” who claimed that the sole alternative to Stalinism could be the restoration of capitalist customs and relations.

The fate of Soviet Thermidor developed, however, in a different way than had originally been foreseen by the Left Opposition. Once the bureaucracy was firmly established, it began to feel a threat to its domination coming from the growing neo-bourgeois elements in both town and country, and sharply shifted the front.

“It is completely obvious that the bureaucracy did not rout the proletarian vanguard, sever the network of international revolution and proclaim the philosophy of inequality in order to capitulate before the bourgeoisie and become transformed into its servant, or simply be cast aside from the helm of state. The bureaucracy was mortally frightened by the consequences of its six-year policy. Hence arose the sharp turn against the kulak, against the NEPman.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus was opened the so-called “third period” (after the first two — war communism and the NEP), which Stalin called “the full-scale offensive of socialism all along the front,” Bukharin called “the period of emergency measures,” and Trotsky called the ultra-left, adventuristic course of the Stalin leadership.

Having diametrically changed its slogans, the ruling faction proclaimed a struggle against the “rightists” in the party, the kulaks in the village, and the NEPmen in the city. These slogans concealed the irreconcilable struggle between recent allies — the new bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy — for the surplus product of national labor.

“Whoever disposes of the surplus product, has state power at his disposal. Thus, between the petty bourgeoisie ... and the bureaucracy, which had helped the petty bourgeoisie rise above the masses of the countryside, a direct struggle for power and income was begun.”<sup>17</sup>

The bureaucracy managed to deal with the capitalist elements of the city relatively easily. In the NEP period, “private entrepreneurs undoubtedly displayed considerable energy when it came to corrupting the Soviet apparatus through bribery and every other form of indulgences. But nevertheless, it was not this that was the main reason for the bureaucracy’s irritation with private entrepreneurs, and in particular, concessionaires.”<sup>18</sup> Some private, joint-stock, and concessionary undertakings worked better than state enterprises, displayed more initiative, and produced commodities of a much higher quality. Even the state enterprises preferred to buy the products of joint-stock companies. The goal that Lenin set when introducing concessions

“consisted in not allowing the awareness of their inviolability to eclipse the state monopolies. But it was precisely this that the lazy bureaucracy did not want. Under the guise of an irreconcilable struggle for socialist industry, it in actual fact was fighting for its own monopoly right — quietly, without interference and competition — to have the state economy at its disposal.”<sup>19</sup>

For this reason, although the process was gradual, the concessions, mixed companies and other private companies were rather quickly liquidated; given rational state regulation, they might have still played a useful role in the Soviet economy. Already by 1929 private trade had been almost fully eliminated, and the last private factories were nationalized. Having destroyed the “urban” NEP in the name of strengthening the positions of the bureaucracy, Stalin was the leader of this policy that was far from always economically justified.

The struggle between the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie in the countryside developed much more sharply and over a more prolonged period. There, the kulaks had acquired economic power that was incommensurate with their numbers, and had subordinated significant layers of the peasantry to their

influence. However, powerful levers were in the hands of the Soviet state, allowing effective resistance against attempts at capitalist restoration without resorting to the total expropriation of the kulaks, let alone to their deportation — an extreme measure which the Bolsheviks had not even used after the October Revolution against the big bourgeoisie. Effective struggle against the kulaks by economic methods (through a policy of taxes, prices, and credits) required the restoration of party and Soviet democracy. The bureaucracy, however, had liquidated the democratic mechanisms in the party and the country for the sake of preserving its monopoly power and privileges. It proved merely capable, therefore, of ceaselessly intensifying cruel administrative pressure on the kulaks, which unavoidably led to a fierce struggle against the bulk of the peasantry.

Having come face to face with a hostile countryside, the bureaucracy grew frightened by its isolation.

“With just its own forces, the bureaucracy could not crush the kulak and in general the petty bourgeoisie, which had arisen and continued to grow on the foundations of NEP; it needed the help of the proletariat. Hence its strained attempt to pass off its struggle against the petty-bourgeoisie for surplus product and for power as the struggle of the proletariat against attempts at capitalist restoration.”<sup>20</sup>

Trotsky noted that “in the eyes of simpletons, the theory and practice of the ‘third period’ seemed to refute the theory of the Thermidorian period of the Russian Revolution. In actual fact, it confirmed it.”<sup>21</sup> Stalin and his entourage, who had tried to reinforce the positions of the bureaucracy, masked in every conceivable way the social essence of their policy, in order to obtain the support of the working class and the peasant poor in the struggle against the kulak. Proof that they managed to gain this support can be seen in their relatively easy victory over the “right deviation.” To describe the causes of this victory, Trotsky cited the words of the Bolshevik Barmine, who had broken with Stalin in 1937. Barmine noted that the latter had been able to “use to his advantage the discontent (in the party — *V.R.*) prompted by the expulsions and arrests (of the Left Opposition — *V.R.*). They had accepted the expulsion of the Trotskyists only against their will, reluctantly; the campaign that was first launched against the rightists, however, was well accepted by the party.”<sup>22</sup>

To the worker and party masses deceived by Stalin’s maneuver, including many participants in the Left Opposition, the official slogans of the “third period” — struggle against the kulak, “the right deviation” and opportunism — appeared to be a rebirth of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and of the Socialist Revolution. “We then warned: the question is not only about what is being done, but about who is doing it,” recalled Trotsky.

“Given the existence of Soviet democracy, i.e., the self-rule of the toilers, the struggle against the kulak would never have taken such convulsive, panicked and savage forms, and would have led to a general rise in the economic and cultural level of the masses.”<sup>23</sup>

The bureaucracy, however, not trusting the masses and fearing them, entered into battle with the kulak “on the back of the workers.” As a consequence, this struggle assumed an extremely cruel and bloody character and grew into a civil war with a significant segment of the peasantry. Thanks to the support of the proletariat, the bureaucracy won a victory in this strife, ending with a consolidation of its absolute power in the country. On the socialist foundations of Soviet economy there arose a

political superstructure in the form of a dictatorship of the bureaucracy, which had politically usurped the working class.

Thus, guided by its own self-interests, the bureaucracy chose its own, anti-popular methods of carrying out social transformations in the countryside, which inevitably led to the deformation of this historically progressive goal.

A turn that was just as striking as the shift in agricultural policy was accomplished by Stalin concerning the problems of industrialization. Before 1928, he had asserted that, from without, the Soviet Union was only threatened by military intervention. The Left Opposition declared that, besides this threat, there existed the danger of the intervention of cheap prices. Therefore, to overcome the scissors between prices for domestic and imported commodities, and to strengthen the country's position on the world market, accelerated industrialization was needed. For posing the question in this way, the Opposition was accused by the Stalin-Bukharin faction in 1925–1927 of advocating “super-industrialization.” However, from 1928 on, Stalin began to demand forced industrialization, assuring that “either we achieve this, or they will trample us.” The adventuristic tempo of developing industry that Stalin insisted on

“arose not out of correct insight and understanding of the dynamics of our economic construction, but empirically, under the lash of the market, of criticism from the Opposition, and of crises, a good half of which were caused by the limitations and tail-endism of the leadership.”<sup>[24](#)</sup>

After the first successes of industrialization, Stalin and the Stalinists, who had previously derided the coefficients Trotsky had predicted as “the fantastic music of the future,” repeatedly changed the figures of the Five-Year Plan for industry in a sharply upward direction. The last review of the control figures adopted at the Sixteenth Conference in 1929 occurred at the Sixteenth Congress in 1930. There, Stalin demanded to increase, by the end of the Five-Year Plan, the production of iron to 17 million tons instead of the planned 10 million; the production of tractors to 170,000 instead of 55,000; of automobiles, to 200,000 instead of 100,000. He proposed to more than double the control figures in the realm of non-ferrous metallurgy and the construction of agricultural machinery.<sup>[25](#)</sup>

The new control figures were accompanied by new slogans. To the slogan issued at the Sixteenth Conference, “Catch up and surpass technologically and economically the advanced capitalist countries,” was added the slogan: “Complete the Five-Year Plan in four years.”

In criticizing these slogans as the expression of the most irresponsible adventurism, Trotsky foresaw that such criticism might give rise to the false conception that the Opposition “is changing places with the apparatus,” since now it was accusing the apparatus of super-industrialization.

“All such judgments, approximations and comparisons can be seen beforehand, and one can even write beforehand the articles and speeches that will be produced on this topic. It is not very hard, however, to reveal the lightmindedness of such arguments.”<sup>[26](#)</sup>

Trotsky pointed out that, right up until 1928, the Opposition, which had estimated the possibilities of industrialization immeasurably more broadly and boldly than the ruling faction, never set the utopian task “in the shortest possible time” to catch up and surpass the capitalist world. “We never



considered the resources of industrialization to be limitless, and its tempo to be dependent only on the bureaucracy's whip.”<sup>27</sup>

It was not the program of the Opposition that underwent actual changes, but the policy of the ruling faction. The struggle between this faction and the Opposition became particularly acute at the very moment when the correctness of the Opposition was confirmed on all the decisive points of disagreement. The Stalin leadership rejected the minimalist draft of the Five-Year Plan prepared for the Fifteenth Congress in 1927, and replaced it with a new, much bolder one, which was adopted by the Sixteenth Conference in 1929. When, however, the first year of the Five-Year Plan confirmed the feasibility of the high tempos of development in industry, the empiricists, shaken by this fact, “decided that from now on everything was possible. Opportunism, as often happens in history, turned into its opposite: adventurism.”<sup>28</sup>

At the beginning of this zigzag, Trotsky was already warning:

“In 1923–1928, the Politburo did not understand the enormous *possibilities* inherent in nationalized industry and planned methods of economy, and was ready to reconcile itself with an annual growth of 4 or 9 percent. Now, due to its incomprehension of the material *limits* of industrialization, it easily jumps from 20 percent to 30 percent, adventuristically trying to turn every partial and temporary achievement into a norm, thereby completely losing sight of the interdependency of various sides of the economic process.”<sup>29</sup>

Just as it did in questions of collectivization, the Stalin leadership traced an arc of 180 degrees in questions of the development of industry, turning socialist industrialization into reckless, bureaucratic super-industrialization.

“Now slogan number one is: ‘Without looking back, forward!’ The plan is being constantly revised upward ... Any reference by an economist or by workers to objective obstacles — poor equipment, insufficient raw material, or its poor quality — is equated with betrayal of the revolution. What is demanded from above: a broad scale, shock-work, go on the offensive! Everything else is from the devil.”<sup>30</sup>

Trotsky paid special attention to the following: “In the name of adventuristic tempos, changing on the fly, uncoordinated, untested, and frequently undermining one another, the greatest pressure is being exerted on the workforce at a time when the standard of living of the workers is clearly dropping.”<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, stable tempos of economic growth could only be reached under conditions in which there was a systematic rise in the material and cultural level of the broad masses.

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1. L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin*, vol. II, M., Terra, 1990, p. 233.

2. Ibid., p. 231.

3. Ibid., p. 221.

4. Ibid., p. 201.

5. Ibid., p. 222.

6. Ibid., p. 242.

7. Ibid., p. 235.

8. Pro-capitalist forces in the USSR passed through an analogous “period of defending the peasantry” in the first years of “perestroika,” when they still had not decided to speak for the restoration of private property and other attributes of the capitalist order.

- [2.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 7, pp. 375–376 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 7, pp. 385–386].
- [10.](#) N. I. Bukharin, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, M., 1988, pp. 210–217.
- [11.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin*, vol. II, p. 237.
- [12.](#) Ibid., p. 221.
- [13.](#) Ibid., p. 224.
- [14.](#) Ibid., pp. 223–224.
- [15.](#) A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiia vlasti*, p. 197.
- [16.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin*, vol. II, p. 244.
- [17.](#) Ibid., pp. 243–244.
- [18.](#) Ibid., p. 242.
- [19.](#) Ibid., p. 242.
- [20.](#) Ibid., p. 224.
- [21.](#) Ibid., p. 223.
- [22.](#) Ibid., p. 246.
- [23.](#) Ibid., p. 224.
- [24.](#) Ibid., p. 245.
- [25.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, pp. 345–346, 348 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12, pp. 355–356].
- [26.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 6 [Cf.: “The New Course in the Soviet Economy,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 115].
- [27.](#) Ibid.
- [28.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Predannaia revoliutsiia*, pp. 32–33 [Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, Labor Publications, 1991, p. 31].
- [29.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 11, p. 12 [Cf.: “A Squeak in the Apparatus,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 170].
- [30.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 2 [Cf.: “The New Course in the Soviet Economy,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 107].
- [31.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 10, p. 3 [Cf.: “Open Letter to the CPSU,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 137].

# 22. The Alternative of the Left Opposition in 1930

In 1930, Trotsky repeatedly emphasized that the successful fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan required a congruence of the tempos of industrialization and collectivization, the observance of proportions between the transformations in industry and in agriculture. Meanwhile,

“the tempo of collectivization has already blown up the Five-Year Plan ... To assume that all the other elements of the plan — industry, transport, finance — could develop on a previously indicated scale when agriculture is making absolutely unforeseen leaps, would mean to see the economic plan not as an organic whole, but as a simple sum of bureaucratic commands.”<sup>1</sup>

No smaller danger was presented by the leap in industrial tempos, which surpassed the country’s material capabilities. First of all, this led to a worsening of the quality of production, which hit the consumer hard and undermined the future healthy development of industry. Secondly, it led to the creation of imaginary resources where there really were none, i.e., it gave birth to paper-money inflation, which was a symptom of a looming economic crisis. Before this crisis “develops in explosive form, it weighs heavily on the everyday life of the masses, raising prices or preventing their reduction.”<sup>2</sup>

Today, when layers of statistics concealed by the Stalinists have been made public, we can fully evaluate the correctness of these warnings made by Trotsky. Already in 1930, the mass of money in circulation had grown by 45 percent in comparison with the preceding year, and the tempo of its growth exceeded the pace of growth in retail commodity circulation by 2.7 times. It was precisely from this time that the specific “Soviet” form of inflation began to operate, as the result of unrestrained state emission of money — a combination of direct and hidden price increases with a commodity famine.



*Caricature of Trotsky by the Soviet artist Deni, 1930*

Demanding that inflation be halted, since it was the cruelest tax being inflicted on the workers, Trotsky wrote:

“In any case, one measure now imposes itself imperiously and urgently: the strictest financial discipline ... Financial discipline must become the first step of overall economic discipline. If the path to overblown and unattainable undertakings is not blocked right now, if the tempos are not brought within realistic limits, then inflation might soon give them fatal proportions and lead to consequences that will injure not only the false reputation of the ignorant leadership — a reputation based wholly on moral inflation — but also the real values of immeasurably greater importance: the October Revolution will suffer.”<sup>3</sup>

Calling for a shift away from a formal chasing after the quantity of production to a real improvement in its quality; to forgo a portion of accumulation in favor of today’s consumption by the workers, Trotsky wrote:

“When we demand that, before legislating a 30 percent yearly growth, one must seriously verify the inter-relationships between all branches of industry and of the national economy as a whole, from the standpoint of the productivity of labor and the net costs of production — does this mean that we are calling for a retreat to yesterday’s positions held by Stalin?”<sup>4</sup>

Already in the first quarter of the 1929/1930 economic year, despite a major advance (approximately a 26 percent growth in industrial production compared with the first quarter of the previous year), the first setback occurred. The tempos of industrial growth, particularly in heavy industry, fell behind the planned assignments for the first time. In order to reduce this falling behind and to meet the gross indicators [of production], enterprises produced items of lower quality. The amount of spoilage increased. All of this, as Trotsky emphasized, showed that

“as could have been foreseen theoretically, the accelerated pace that has been undertaken exceeds the economy’s power. Industrialization is ever more sustained by administrative whip. Equipment and the workforce are being overloaded. Disproportions between various realms of industry are accumulating.”<sup>5</sup>



Today it is not difficult to see that the consequences of the bureaucratic planning reported by Trotsky describe not only the tendencies of Stalin's "great leap" at the beginning of the 1930s, but also the constant disorders that accompanied the entire development of the Soviet economy: violation of proportionality between various branches of the national economy; emphasis on purely quantitative figures while ignoring the quality of production; emphasis on ever newer capital investment to the detriment of the current consumer needs of the population.

On the eve of the Sixteenth Party Congress in 1930, Trotsky advocated a planned reduction of the tempos of industrialization and collectivization that were beyond the country's powers. He wrote:

"We, the Left Opposition, are not afraid of crying at this time to the bureaucracy that has gone too far: '*Go back!*' It is necessary to call a halt to the award-winning leaps in industrialization; to review the tempos on the basis of experience and theoretical foresight; to coordinate collectivization with technical and other resources; to subordinate policy toward the kulak to the real possibilities of collectivization — in short, after periods of *tail-endism* and *adventurism*, it is necessary to take the path of *Marxist realism*.'" <sup>6</sup>

More concretely, the alternative of the Left Opposition was outlined in Rakovsky's article, "At the Congress and in the Nation," and in Trotsky's article, "An Open Letter to Members of the VKP(b)."

In the realm of agriculture, Rakovsky proposed the abandonment of complete collectivization and of the liquidation of the kulaks; in the realm of industry, to sharply reduce the number of construction projects and to concentrate resources on the most important construction sites; in the realm of finances, to bring expenditures into correspondence with real material resources and to sharply reduce monetary emission; as for the question of workers, to allocate resources for the immediate and palpable improvement in the standard of living for the working class and to elevate its role in managing production. <sup>7</sup>



*Sergo Ordzhonikidze (1886–1937)*

Similar ideas were contained in Trotsky's program; he demanded a reduction in the scale of industrial construction and a reallocation of the resources, to be then made available for raising the

living standards of the workers and for improving the quality of production, which was needed for producers and consumers alike. He called for a halt to complete collectivization and administrative dekulakization, and their replacement with a cautious selection of viable kolkhozes, created on the basis of genuine free choice. He proposed to make contracting the guiding principle of policy dealing with the kulak, i.e., to conclude agreements with the kulak farms obligating the latter to sell a certain amount of produce at state-designated prices. Thus, at the very height of collectivization, Trotsky recognized the necessity of preserving kulak farms for years ahead, under the condition that economic measures would be used to limit the amount of what they accumulated.

When Trotsky advanced this program, the Stalinists detected his “capitulation” and his rapprochement with the “rightists.” At the Sixteenth Congress, Rudzutak accused the “rightists” of “saying to a significant degree what the Trotskyists and Trotsky are now saying, namely, that we are accomplishing our tempos of industrialization on the basis of impoverishing the whole country.”<sup>8</sup>

After citing several of Trotsky’s proposals listed above, Ordzhonikidze declared:

“How do you like that! Trotsky, who howled about tempos, who uttered ‘left’ phrases during the greatest offensive of the proletariat against capitalist elements of our country ... now finds nothing else to do but toss out the slogan: ‘Retreat from adventurism’ ... No, excuse me, our party will not only not retreat, but it will ever more go on the offensive ... Come on, what a leftist! ... Remember how he blathered about the kulak, how much he scolded us because, according to him, we weren’t fighting the kulak the right way. And now, when the Bolshevik Party, having prepared itself beforehand, as it should, has taken this kulak by the throat, he says: don’t touch, stop the dekulakization. And that’s what’s called ‘leftism’! ... And that’s what’s called the ‘leftist’ Trotsky!!”<sup>9</sup>

Having been drawn into a policy of super-industrialization that was being carried out at the expense of not only the peasantry, but also the urban proletariat, and having run into the growing resistance of the masses to administrative despotism and violence, the Stalin leadership was incapable of correcting its social and economic policy, and even more so of adequately comprehending any critical comments and admonitions. Hence flowed the inevitable aggression and vulgar invective against all opponents of the “general line,” and most of all against Trotsky. Even in exile, he continued to remain the leader of the most consistent oppositional elements in the party.

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1. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1930, № 10, p. 10 [Cf.: “The Five-Year Plan and World Unemployment,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1930), p. 123].

2. *Ibid.*, p. 3 [Cf.: “Open Letter to the CPSU,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1930), p. 137].

3. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 7 [Cf.: “The New Course in the Soviet Economy,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1930), p. 118].

4. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1930, № 11, p. 12 [Cf.: “A Squeak in the Apparatus,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1930), pp. 170–171].

5. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 2 [Cf.: “The New Course in the Soviet Economy,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1930), p. 107].

6. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1930, № 10, p. 11 [Cf.: “The Five-Year Plan and World Unemployment,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1930), p. 124].

7. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1931, № 25–26, pp. 31–32.

8. *XVI s’ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol’shevikov)*, p. 201.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 323–324.

# 23. Economics and Politics: The Party Regime

At the beginning of the 1930s, Trotsky stressed that the Soviet economy was “hurtling toward a crisis mainly because of the monstrously bureaucratic methods of drafting a plan.”<sup>1</sup> The excessively swollen bureaucratism “is not ethereal in nature. It is embodied in a cohesive bureaucracy, great in number, with an entire world of self-contained interests.”<sup>2</sup> Having monopolized the solving of all problems of planning, it impedes the harmonizing of the contradictory interests of different social groups that guards against the escalation of the antagonism of these interests into social conflict. It treats the plan as a dogma provided beforehand, when it should be viewed as a working hypothesis that must be collectively verified in the process of fulfilling the plan.

Elements of such a verification are “not only the figures of the accounting department, but also the muscles and nerves of the workers and the political health of the peasants. To examine, verify, summarize and generalize all of this can only be done by a party that is active, independent and self-assured.”<sup>3</sup>

In disclosing the organizational mechanisms of developing and correcting plans, Trotsky stressed that the central axis of planning consists in distributing the national income between accumulation and consumption, between the capital construction fund and the wage fund, between town and country and various layers of workers. This axis must shift under the direct influence of the struggle of vital social interests. Such a struggle, which must find public expression in the arena of soviet democracy, is called upon to serve as a basic factor of socialist planning. A genuine uplifting of the socialist economy is bound up, not with the liquidation of discussions, but, on the contrary, with their development on a new foundation. Along with factions defending the interests of different social groups, participants in these discussions must include “factions” of “people engaged in electrification,” “oil industry workers,” “tractor operators” and so forth, fighting for the fate of their branches in the national economy. Such a struggle of economic groupings, as an expression of “industrial democracy,” must serve to guarantee the achievement of optimal economic proportions nationwide.

To make sure that this struggle did not take on a narrowly departmental character, its participants must include not only economic directors, but also the laboring masses, formulating and developing in discussions their own political culture. Participation of the masses is especially necessary during discussion of such an important element of the plan as “the question of *what* the workers and peasants want and are able to consume now, and what they can save and accumulate,” for the sake of economic successes in the near and more distant future. For this reason, soviet democracy becomes a “matter of economic necessity.”<sup>4</sup>

If the struggle of ideological groupings and economic proposals is replaced by peremptory bureaucratic commands, and the plan is prescribed for the workers as an official directive, then the

costs of such methods of economic management inevitably will turn out to be more serious than the costs of the spontaneous play of market forces under capitalism. Imposing prize-winning leaps of industrialization on the enterprises not only removes all obstacles along the road of frantic economic activity, but “multiplies it with the full force of state incentives and compulsion.”<sup>5</sup>

The gigantic advantages of a planned economy — given constant verification of the entire economic experience — can facilitate the anticipation or mitigation of partial periodic conjunctural crises. But these same advantages, given the bureaucratic nature of a leadership which has completely freed its will from criticism and control by the masses, inevitably turns into its opposite. Under these conditions, centralized management of the economy can “lead to such an accumulation of crises and contradictions, that any capitalist crisis will appear to be child’s play by comparison.”<sup>6</sup>

Trotsky’s position was confirmed by the entire experience of economic and social development in the USSR at the beginning of the 1930s. In these years, the economic crisis did not emerge in the form of a general reduction in production, characteristic of the most destructive capitalist crises (such a precipitous fall of production first occurred on the territory of the USSR after its break-up in 1991 and the rollback of its former republics to backward, semi-colonial capitalism). The economic and political crisis that reached its peak toward the end of the first Five-Year Plan was expressed in the exhaustion of productive forces in the countryside, the impoverishment of the overwhelming majority of the population, the explosion of social antagonisms, the violation of civil peace in the nation, and the undermining of the attractive nature of socialist ideas in the consciousness of a significant section of the workers. The profound consequences of these destructive processes were felt in the USSR for many decades to come.

The process of the degeneration of party and soviet democracy into a regime of personal Bonapartist dictatorship, resting on an impersonal apparatus, was finally completed at the beginning of the 1930s. It was the main reason for the reproduction of economic disproportions that accompanied the entire development of the bureaucratically deformed planned economy in the USSR.

Defining the political system that had developed in this period as “bureaucratic absolutism,” Trotsky saw its main feature to be the stifling of the party’s inner life, its actual replacement by the uncontrolled bureaucratic apparatus that had degenerated into a closed caste. This transformation of the party regime removed the only possible mechanism of genuinely socialist construction — the collective, creative search for and free discussion of its ways and methods.

Developing Lenin’s understanding of socialism as the living creativity of the masses, Trotsky stressed:

“Socialism is not a ready-made system which can emerge in finished form from an individual mind, even if it is the most brilliant mind. The tasks of correctly distributing the productive forces and resources can be solved only by means of constant criticism, verification, and the ideological struggle of various groupings within the proletariat.”<sup>7</sup>

On this basis, Trotsky criticized the bureaucratic “sociology” that was following the practice of the apparatus and “justifying” it in hindsight. Aided by the basic dogma of this “sociology” — the thesis of a “monolithic” party — the bureaucracy had eliminated



“the party itself as a living force, which from day to day orients itself to its surroundings, criticizes, thinks, summarizes the political processes taking place, warns the leadership about danger, renews the leadership, makes necessary changes in the projected course, guarantees the timeliness of a political maneuver, and sees itself as the core of the nation.”<sup>8</sup>

Having banned party discussions, the Stalin leadership deprived itself of the possibility of following the processes that were unfolding within the party.

“The Central Committee *does not know* the party, because the party does not know itself; because surveillance of the party through secret informers in no way replaces the free expression by the party of its thoughts; finally, and most of all, because the Central Committee’s fear of the party is supplemented by the party’s fear of the Central Committee.”<sup>9</sup>

The leadership’s fear of the party explains the increased political surveillance of communists who were constantly oppressed by the fear of uttering a “seditious” idea or of unwittingly committing a deed that might be interpreted as a deviation from the “general line.”

The inevitable consequence of replacing the party with an all-powerful apparatus, completely preoccupied with preserving its own power and prestige, was the accumulation of ever newer economic blunders and disproportions.

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<sup>1</sup>. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 7 [Cf.: “The New Course in the Soviet Economy,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, pp. 116–117].

<sup>2</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 15 [Cf.: “Lessons of the Capitulations (Obituary Reflections),” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 86].

<sup>3</sup>. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1931, № 20, p. 9 [Cf.: “Problems of the Development of the USSR,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–1931)*, p. 220].

<sup>4</sup>. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 7 [Cf.: “The New Course in the Soviet Economy,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 117].

<sup>5</sup>. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1930, № 10, p. 17 [“Replies to Letters from Friends,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, p. 403].

<sup>6</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1931, № 23, p. 8 [Cf.: “A New Zigzag and New Dangers,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–1931)*, p. 291].

<sup>8</sup>. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1929, № 7, p. 39 [Cf.: “We Need Help,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1929)*, p. 376].

<sup>9</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40 [*Ibid.*].

# 24. The Methods of Stalinist Industrialization

In the second half of 1930, reports in Soviet newspapers that resembled wartime communiqués spoke ever more frequently about “breakdowns” on the “labor front.” This angered Stalin, who in September directed Molotov to call to order the central newspapers for publishing articles about falling tempos and the catastrophic turnover of workers because of poor provisions:

“For god’s sake, quiet the press for squeaking like a mouse about ‘continuous breakdowns,’ ‘endless failures,’ ‘disruptions,’ and other such nonsense. This is a hysterical Trotskyist-right-deviationist tone ...”<sup>1</sup>

The severe consequences of the extremely tense situation in the country had become clear by the end of 1930. Previously, the economic year had begun in October. Facing the failure to meet the goals planned for the 1929/1930 economic year, the government introduced a so-called special quarter for 1930 (October-December). By the end of this period, the proposal was to meet the indicators set by the plan for September.

In analyzing the statistical results of the special quarter, Trotsky came to the conclusion that the tempos in themselves were high and were an indubitable indicator of the advantages inherent in a planned economy. “Given correct leadership, which takes into account real economic processes and makes the necessary changes to the plan in the process of its fulfillment, workers could experience a legitimate feeling of pride in the successes achieved. Now, however, the exact opposite result is obtained.” Guided by considerations of bureaucratic prestige, the center, as before, demands that the enterprises fulfill unrealistically elevated assignments.

“Economic officials and workers more often than not see that the plans cannot be met, but they cannot say this aloud; they work under pressure, nursing their grievances; honest and efficient administrators dare not look into the eyes of the workers. Everyone is dissatisfied. Accounts are artificially adjusted to fit the plan, the quality of goods is adjusted to fit the accounts — all economic processes are enveloped in a haze of falsehood.”<sup>2</sup>

The introduction of a special quarter could not save the tempos of industrial growth from decreasing, nor could it prevent the deterioration of all other economic indicators, that, in 1931, turned out to be much lower than the planning targets. The main reasons for this were the constant increase of investment in heavy industry and construction projects already underway; the discrepancy between the enormous investments in the construction of enterprises and the real possibilities of supplying raw materials and equipment; lagging behind in the development of production infrastructure, primarily transport and energy, and even more so of the social infrastructure (housing and social-cultural establishments).<sup>3</sup> Industrial accumulation proved to be much lower than what had been planned. From 1931, industry, in which sector “A” was occupying an ever-growing role, became unprofitable and remained so until the end of the 1930s. The construction of many enterprises dragged on. Unbearable working and living conditions for the workers gave rise to worker turnover, absenteeism, slipshod work, damage to machinery, a high percentage of defective goods, and a lowering of the growth rates in labor productivity.



*Two posters urging the completion of the Five-Year Plan in four years.*

If the very turn to industrialization and collectivization proceeded in a state of administrative panic, then the further development of these processes revived a wartime atmosphere. This can be seen in the terminology of Soviet newspapers, where labor processes are described in language reminiscent of the formulations and slogans of the civil war: front, mobilization, break-throughs, cavalry, and so forth. Such terminology reflected the actual replacement of far-sighted, efficient and flexible planning by voluntaristic planning, in which correctives to the plan were made without discussion, and the workers were relegated to only one role: being relentlessly spurred on. As a result of all this, economic disproportions accumulated, in a concealed and therefore particularly dangerous form, laden with explosive crises.

In his speech, “On the Tasks of Economic Administrators,” given on 4 February 1931, Stalin acknowledged that in 1930, the growth of industrial production was 25 percent instead of the 32 percent projected by the annual plan. Nevertheless, he called, as before, to guarantee a 45 percent increase in 1931, and to fulfill the Five-Year Plan in four years, and in basic, decisive branches of industry — in three years.<sup>4</sup>

Trotsky regarded the transformation of the Five-Year Plan into a Four-Year Plan to be light-minded adventurism, jeopardizing the basic plan. He warned:

“Not only will the task of ‘catching up and surpassing’ not be accomplished, even with the most fortunate implementation of the Five-Year Plan, but the Five-Year Plan cannot be met in four years even if it is carried out under the most monstrous pressure. Moreover, the administrative adventurism of the leadership makes the completion of the plan in five years even less likely.”<sup>5</sup>



Trotsky was just as categorical in opposing the claim made by Stalin at the Sixteenth Congress in 1930 about “the nation’s entry into socialism.” In addressing this thesis, which was repeated in innumerable official articles and speeches, he wrote:

“Isn’t it monstrous? The country has not emerged from a goods famine, there are interruptions of provisions at every step, children lack enough milk, but the official philistines proclaim: ‘the country has entered into the period of socialism.’ Could it be possible to compromise socialism more maliciously? ... To tell the builders who are scrambling along scaffolding with bricks and cement, often half-starved and not infrequently plunging below, that they can already settle down in the building — ‘We’ve entered into socialism!’ — means to make a mockery of both the builders and of socialism.”<sup>6</sup>

The thesis about “entering into socialism” was a transitional formulation between the “theory” of the possible victory of socialism in one country and the thesis advanced by Stalin in 1936 about the construction of socialism in the USSR. The genuine criteria of the victory of socialism — the achievement of a higher productivity of labor and a higher material and cultural standard of living than in the advanced capitalist countries — were replaced by purely quantitative criteria: the number of collectivized peasant farms formed; the number of factories, electric power stations and railways built; and so forth. What this implied was that “the entry into socialism” in the next few years would lead to a sharp upturn in the well-being of the working population. By deceiving the workers with radiant, but unreal, promises, the bureaucracy was cruelly exploiting the enthusiasm of their advanced layers who were enthralled by the idea of socialist construction.



*Komsomol shock-brigade workers at the “Metallist” factory in Moscow, 1931.*

The enthusiasm and selflessness of millions of people in the years of the first Five-Year Plan is not an invention of Stalinist propaganda, but an undoubted reality of that time. We find evidence of the atmosphere of mass working-class inspiration not only in fiction of the 1930s, but also in many “human documents.” Thus, A. M. Isaev, the future head designer of spacecraft, set off for the



Magnitogorsk industrial complex at the end of 1930 as a volunteer. He wrote to his parents from there:

“Not long ago, because of a lag in production that had developed, they wanted to present us with a burlap banner (one of the forms of moral sanctions used during those years at enterprises and construction sites – *V. R.*). Let me tell you, many of the miners cried at our meeting and vowed not to allow such shame! I never thought that a worker (of course, a permanent one, not a seasonal worker) looks the way he actually does. If necessary, a worker works not nine, but twelve to sixteen hours, and even for thirty-six hours in a row — so that production does not suffer! Throughout the entire construction site, thousands of instances of genuine heroism are performed every day.”<sup>7</sup>

Official propaganda advertised labor heroism in every possible way, even in those instances when it was paid for by the downright exhaustion or disabling of the workers. In a report at the Twelfth Plenum of the ECCI in 1932, Otto Kuusinen proudly gave the following example:

“At a construction site of the Stalingrad tractor factory, the roof had to be glazed in temperatures of 40 degrees below zero. A brigade of Komsomol-glaziers volunteered to do the job. Many of them later had to be taken to the hospital with frost-bitten hands and faces. The roof was glazed by the targeted deadline (applause).”<sup>8</sup>

Correspondents of the *Bulletin of the Opposition* often mentioned labor enthusiasm as an important factor in the successes of industrialization. One of the letters stated:

“At every step you encounter selflessly devoted workers, both young and old, giving themselves fully to the cause which constitutes the content of their lives. Skilled workers, particularly communists, often work ten and twelve hours per day, trying to fill in all the gaps and reach all the needed percentages.”<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, letters from the USSR emphasized that workers who displayed such selflessness were being ever more severely worn down by the difficult food situation, the extremely bad housing conditions, and incessant bureaucratic harassment. “Even the most advanced shock-brigade detachments of the proletariat are feeling deep fatigue.”<sup>10</sup>

“Socialist competition,” organized by administrative methods, became a means of spurring on labor enthusiasm. Describing this as a way of achieving high tempos “to a large degree at the expense of human muscles and nerves,” Trotsky wrote:

“We do not doubt for a minute that a certain layer of workers, particularly communists, bring genuine enthusiasm to their work, nor do we doubt that a broader mass of workers at various moments or periods, at various enterprises, are seized with this enthusiasm. But one would have to understand nothing about human psychology, and even physiology, to allow for the possibility of mass labor ‘enthusiasm’ for a number of years.”<sup>11</sup>

Returning to this theme, Trotsky emphasized the groundlessness of betting on enthusiasm as a long-term factor of socialist construction. “Heroic enthusiasm might seize the masses for relatively *short* historical periods. A small *minority* is capable of showing enthusiasm for a whole historical epoch: the idea of a revolutionary party is based on this, as the selection of the best elements of a class.” However, the enthusiasm of significant layers of workers cannot be maintained for years under conditions of unceasing material burdens, shortages and hardships. Meanwhile,

“Socialist construction is a task of decades. To guarantee its resolution can only be done by the systematic elevation of the material and cultural level of the masses. This is the main condition, more important than the immediate success of a Dneprostroi [hydro-electric station], a Turksib [railway], a Kuzbass [coal-mining and metallurgical area], and so forth. For with the fall of the physical and moral energy of the proletariat, all gigantic undertakings might fail to be carried through to their conclusion.”<sup>12</sup>

The bureaucracy tried to compensate for the limitations of material stimuli to labor with measures of “moral encouragement,” by establishing several medals that were awarded for “shock-work.” Although the issuing of medals at that time had not taken on the scale and formal-bureaucratic forms as in subsequent years, Trotsky was highly skeptical in his evaluation of the given innovation, which facilitated the growth of vanity and pomposity. He recalled that, even in the horrifying conditions of the civil war, it was only after long hesitation that Lenin agreed to awarding the Order of the Red Banner, and only then as a temporary measure, whereas in the thirteenth year of the revolution, the bureaucracy had introduced “four or however many more awards.”<sup>13</sup>



*A certificate awarded to a worker for striving to fulfill the Five-Year Plan in four years, at shock-work tempos, by competing to raise the productivity of labor;  
November 7, 1932.*

Given all this, the main method used by the bureaucracy for driving forward industrialization remained crude administrative pressure on the workers in order to increase the intensity of their labor and reduce the movement of the work force from one place to another. This pressure was expressed in part by the introduction of the uninterrupted work week and of labor booklets, tying the workers to their workplaces. It was forbidden to pay a worker who had transferred to a new factory more than

the sum which he received at his previous location (the sum of his pay was recorded in his labor booklet). Sharply condemning measures of this kind, Trotsky emphasized that they might “provoke a reaction among the masses that is incomparably more threatening than what was seen at the end of the civil war.”<sup>14</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup>. *Kommunist*, 1990, № 11, p. 104.
- <sup>2</sup>. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1931, № 19, p. 13 [Cf.: “The Five-Year Plan in Four Years?,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, pp. 183–184].
- <sup>3</sup>. Social-cultural projects as a portion of basic spending was 4.9 percent in 1930, and 6 percent in 1931.
- <sup>4</sup>. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13, pp. 29–31 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, pp. 31–33].
- <sup>5</sup>. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 17–18, p. 8 [Cf.: “The Successes of Socialism and Dangers of Adventurism,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, p. 102].
- <sup>6</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6 [*Ibid.*, pp. 96–98].
- <sup>7</sup>. *Pravda*, 28 October 1988.
- <sup>8</sup>. *XII plenum IKKI. Stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. 1, M., 1933, p. 9.
- <sup>9</sup>. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1932, № 29–30, p. 14.
- <sup>10</sup>. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 24.
- <sup>11</sup>. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 17–18, p. 2 [Cf.: “The Successes of Socialism and Dangers of Adventurism,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, pp. 89–90].
- <sup>12</sup>. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1931, № 23, p. 6 [Cf.: “A New Zigzag and New Dangers,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, p. 286].
- <sup>13</sup>. *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 17–18, p. 3 [Cf.: “The Successes of Socialism and Dangers of Adventurism,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, p. 92].
- <sup>14</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 8 [*Ibid.*, p. 102].

# 25. Reprisals against the Non-Party Intelligentsia

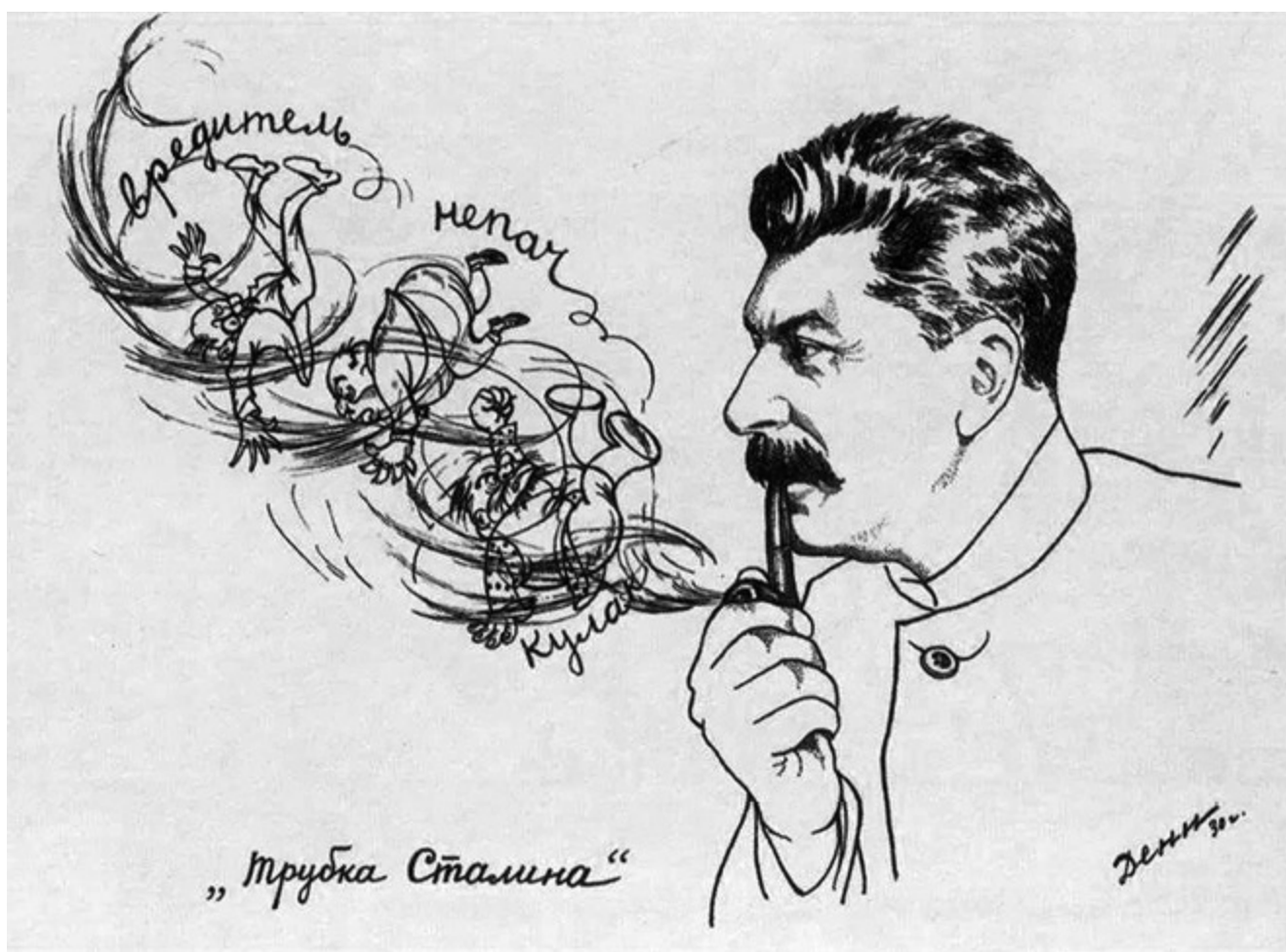
Sensing the mass discontent that had arisen in the country, Stalin tried to redirect it toward “class enemies,” explaining the failures and misfortunes of his social and economic policies by their intrigues. In pursuit of these goals, a series of sham trials and extra-judicial proceedings were carried out to direct the “fury of the masses” toward “wreckers” from among non-party specialists.

In 1930, three groups of specialists were arrested. The first included engineers, academics and planners (Ramzin, Larichev, Ochkin and others); the second — famous agricultural specialists serving in Narkomfin, the People’s Commissariat of Finance, and Narkomzem, the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture (Kondratiev, Chayanov, Yurovsky, Makarov and others); the third — former Mensheviks who had been working in economic and academic establishments (Groman, Sukhanov, Bazarov and others). Correspondingly, the OGPU constructed three anti-Soviet underground parties: “The Promparty” [Industrial Party], “The Working Peasants’ Party” [TKP], and the “Union Bureau” of Mensheviks.

As recently published letters by Stalin show, he regularly received information about the course of the investigation of participants in these “parties” and dictated what kind of testimony had to be obtained from them.

First of all, he demanded that the investigation “reveal” the connections of these parties between themselves and emigré organizations — the Central Committee of the Menshevik Party and the Trade-Industrial Union (“Torgprom”), which united the largest of the former Russian capitalists.





*“Stalin’s Pipe,” by Deni, 1930. In the smoke: wrecker, NEPman, kulak.*

Secondly, Stalin demanded that Menzhinsky, the chairman of the OGPU, “make one of the most important and central points of the new (future) testimony given by the leaders of the TKP, the ‘Promparty’ and especially by Ramzin, the question of the intervention,” supposedly scheduled by foreign powers and the White emigration for 1930. He dictated the reasons why this intervention had not taken place (Poland, Rumania and other countries were not prepared for it) and assigned the task of “having Mssrs. Kondratiev, Yurovsky, Chayanov and others run the gauntlet, for they have been cunningly evading the ‘tendency toward intervention,’ but they are (beyond any doubt!) interventionists.”<sup>1</sup>

The people named by Stalin were, according to the GPU, the leading core of the “Working Peasants’ Party.” The actual name of this party was taken by investigators from the science-fiction novella by A. V. Chayanov that came out at the beginning of the 1920s, *The Journey of My Brother Aleksei to the Land of Peasant Utopia*. This book describes Russia of the future, in which a working peasants’ party was in power that preserved the traditional collective structure of the Russian village, modernized in the spirit of autonomous peasant communes.

Thirdly, Stalin demanded that testimony received during investigation be sent to party leaders and that confessions be obtained from those arrested about “ties” to prominent party members. Asserting that Rykov and Kalinin “undoubtedly helped” the Kondratiev people and Mensheviks, Stalin wrote to Molotov, “I have no doubt that direct contact (through Sokolnikov and Teodorovich) will be uncovered between these gentlemen and the rightists (Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsy).”<sup>2</sup>

Judging from his letters, Stalin was already nurturing the idea about fabricating blocs of former oppositionists. He demanded that they “carefully follow Pyatakov, this truly right-wing Trotskyist (a second Sokolnikov), who is now the most pernicious element in the composition of the Rykov-Pyatakov bloc.”<sup>3</sup>

Stalin intended to use the confessions of “wreckers” to blackmail and frighten not only former oppositionists, but also members of the Politburo who were vacillating. He dictated to Molotov:

“That Kalinin is guilty — there can be no doubt about this. Everything reported about Kalinin in the testimonies is the utter truth. The CC must definitely be told about all this so that Kalinin doesn’t ever again try to get involved with these sly foxes.”

Initially, Stalin intended to exact swift and bloody retribution against the arrested: “Kondratiev, Groman and a couple other scoundrels must be shot.” Within a few days, however, his decision had changed. He began to plan the organization of public trials, noting how he needed the defendants to behave. Stalin suggested directly to Molotov (and through the latter, evidently, to the immediate organizers of the trials):

“Won’t the gentlemen on trial think that they should confess their *errors* and honestly disgrace themselves politically, having at the same time acknowledged the stability of Soviet power and the correctness of the method of collectivization? That would not be bad.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, even then, Stalin viewed show trials as a means of confirming the correctness of his policies through the mouths of the defendants. A short time later, apparently after becoming convinced that the testimony of the “Kondratiev people” did not meet his expectations, Stalin issued a new directive:

“Wait a bit in sending the Kondratiev ‘case’ to trial. This is not without danger. Midway through October we will decide this question together. I have a few notions *against*.”<sup>5</sup>

For the time being, he limited himself to a directive to the OGPU and RKI [Rabkrin] to conduct “face-smashing verification work” at Gosplan and Narkomfin.

In trying to disseminate a version among the people that growing food-supply difficulties were a result of “wrecking,” Stalin ordered:

“All testimonies from wreckers about meat, fish, preserves and vegetables must immediately be published ... They must be published with a report that the TsIK or the SNK had handed this case over for review to the collegium of the OGPU (which serves as something like a tribunal), and within a week make an announcement from the OGPU that all these scoundrels have been shot. They all must be shot.”<sup>6</sup>

In accordance with this directive, on 25 September 1930, the central newspapers published an announcement about the shooting of forty-eight officials in food and trade organizations as “wreckers of worker provisions.”

In the case of the “Working Peasants’ Party [TKP],” Stalin’s idea of organizing a public trial did not come to fruition (evidently, due to the stubbornness of the accused, who refused to supply the confessions demanded of them). The trial of the TKP was held behind closed doors, after which, in 1931, 1932, and 1935, decisions of the Special Board sentenced members of “kulak-SR” groups, supposedly led by the TKP, to repression. In 1937, the majority of those sentenced in these cases

were shot. Only in 1987 did the Supreme Court of the USSR annul all the sentences in the case of the “Working Peasants’ Party,” which, as the investigation established, had never existed.



*Professor Leonid Ramzin at the “Promparty” trial.*



*Newspaper announces death sentences for five defendants in the “Promparty” trial, later commuted to ten years in prison.*

The cases of the “Promparty” and the “Union Bureau” of Mensheviks were more “successfully” prepared; both proceeded as open political trials. The indictment in the case of the “Promparty” stated that it was an espionage-sabotage organization giving aid to Western powers in preparing intervention. The head of the “Promparty” was declared to be Professor Ramzin, director of the Thermotechnical Institute, and member of Gosplan and VSNKh. The basic points of the indictment were built around his confessions during the investigation and the trial, which was held from 25 November through 7 December 1930.

Of the eight defendants of this trial, five, including Ramzin, were sentenced to be shot, but this sentence was commuted by VTsIK to ten years of imprisonment. In addition, the collegium of the

OGPU sentenced about fifty people for participating in the “Promparty.” Some of those convicted in this case (but who did not participate in the open trial) were rehabilitated in 1959–1960.

After the trial’s sentencing, people convicted in the “Promparty” case worked in secret facilities where their expertise was put to use. Many of them were soon amnestied and released. Ramzin was amnestied in 1936, and in 1943, for outstanding scientific inventions, he was awarded a Stalin Prize of the first degree by a special decree of the Sovnarkom. On Stalin’s orders, a vacancy was created for electing Ramzin a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences. When Ramzin’s deputy expressed the fear that former participation in the “Promparty” might impede this election, he replied: “This was a script written by the Lubianka, and the boss [Khoziain] knows this ... The boss remembers me. I am grateful to him for his high opinion of my activity.”<sup>7</sup> During the election, however, the academics and corresponding members almost unanimously voted against Ramzin.

The false nature of the trials of 1930–1931 was clear to many Old Bolsheviks. As Galina Serebriakova recalled, Sokolnikov, who was in London at that time on diplomatic work, said to her after reading the newspaper accounts of the “Promparty” trial: “This is a police trial, they are not guilty.”<sup>8</sup>

“A Comrade’s Letter” from the USSR, published in 1936 in the *Bulletin of the Opposition*, stated:

“Our opposition public in Moscow and Leningrad viewed the clamorous trials of 1931 with cautious skepticism. Soon a number of facts came our way which showed the comical character, the degree of provocation, and the inventiveness of the investigators in these cases.”

After revealing a few of these facts, the author of the letter added that he personally “had come to familiarize himself with how the needed confessions had been extorted and *dictated*, so that the foul concoction of these trials has been absolutely clear for me now — and for a rather long time.”<sup>9</sup>

The letter relayed information that had come from the Verkhneuralsk isolator, which contained prisoners convicted in the trial of the “Union Center.” All the prisoners in the isolator knew that this center had not existed, but was invented by GPU investigators.

In the words of the letter’s author, the confessions at this trial, from a psychological point of view, were purely delusional, and from a political point of view, were the result of some kind of complicated game in which provocation played the dominant role. Several years after the trial, one of the main defendants, Nikolai Sukhanov, began to fight for his release; he sent many sharp declarations and distributed some of them among the isolator’s prisoners. The essence of these



*Nikolai N. Sukhanov*  
(1882–1940)



declarations amounted approximately to the following:

“You demanded the maximum sacrifice, self-slander and so forth. I felt that it was necessary to do all this, since I was sure that this corresponded to the highest interests of the USSR. You — the investigators —and I studied our roles and rehearsed the comedy which we then played out during the trial. I was promised, it goes without saying, that the sentence would be suspended, or would be ceremonial. But, after forcing us to lie and slander ourselves, you now hold us behind bars.” After receiving no reply to his declarations, “this exhausted, old-aged and tortured man, not at all inclined to personal heroism, began to refuse food. The hunger strike lasted thirty to forty days, after which they removed him from Verkhneuralsk and took him to parts unknown.”<sup>10</sup>



*“The Interventionists Have Lost Their Bet!” (Poster by Deni, 1931).*

*This poster emphasizes that members of the “Promparty,” until convicted in court, were preparing foreign intervention through “wrecking” and espionage. The enemies lurking behind the court’s sentence include Raymond Poincaré, Torgprom, Poland, Romania, and the Dutch oil baron and anti-communist, Henri Deterding.*

The *Bulletin* also published an article by the Yugoslav communist, Ante Ciliga, who spent several years in Stalinist prisons and managed in 1934 to escape from the USSR. In describing the methods of organizing the “wreckers” trials, Ciliga wrote that the GPU extracted false confessions from the defendants in order to shift responsibility from the government to the engineers for failures in fulfilling the Five-Year Plan.

During the time the trials were taking place, Trotsky, who knew about the initially hostile attitude of some of the intelligentsia to the Soviet regime, believed that the accusations at these trials were based in reality, to some degree. When he received reports from his supporters about the shift of the Stalin clique to out-and-out judicial falsifications, he issued a clear statement about the mistake he had made. The publication of “A Comrade’s Letter” was accompanied by the following note:

“The editorial board of the *Bulletin* must acknowledge that during the Menshevik trial it greatly underestimated the degree of shamelessness of Stalin’s justice system, and in view of this took the confessions of former Mensheviks too seriously.”<sup>[11](#)</sup>

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- [1.](#) *Kommunist*, 1990, № 11, p. 100.
  - [2.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 103.
  - [3.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 104.
  - [4.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 103.
  - [5.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 105.
  - [6.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 104.
  - [7.](#) *Ogonėk*, 1989, № 12, p. 29.
  - [8.](#) *Izvestiia*, 30 January 1989.
  - [9.](#) *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1936, № 51, p. 15.
  - [10.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.
  - [11.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 15.

# 26. The Alternative of the Left Opposition in 1931

Relentless administrative pressure and increased political repression did not free the national economy from continual breakdowns. The most serious failures of Stalin's plans were shown in the growth of industrial production costs. In 1931, instead of a planned reduction by 11 percent, costs rose by 6.8 percent. For 1932, a more modest reduction in production costs of 1 percent was planned. Nevertheless, the increase turned out to be higher than the previous year, reaching 8.1 percent. This testifies to a fall in the growth of labor productivity and an increase in inflationary processes.

Under conditions in which the performance of industry was changing for the worse, Stalin delivered a speech at a conference of economists on 23 June 1931 entitled "The New Situation and New Tasks of Economic Construction." The speech outlined a new economic program which became known as "The Six Conditions of Comrade Stalin." Trotsky responded to this speech with an article: "A New Zigzag and New Dangers." A comparison of these two documents allows one to envision the content of the alternative to Stalin's policy that was advanced by the Left Opposition in 1931.

In his speech, Stalin said that at the majority of industrial enterprises, one could observe "the absence of a feeling of responsibility for the work, a careless attitude to the machinery, massive breakage at the work stations, and the absence of an impulse to raise the productivity of labor." To illustrate the causes of such a dispiriting situation, he cited what workers had said: "We would have raised the productivity of labor, but who will appreciate us when no one is accountable for anything?" Laying responsibility for all this, as usual, on local leaders, and in this instance, on economic managers, Stalin declared:

"There can be no doubt that our economic administrators understand all this rather well. But they remain silent. Why? Evidently because they fear the truth. But since when have Bolsheviks begun to fear the truth?"<sup>1</sup>

Commenting on these words, Trotsky wrote: "A deadly confession. Or to be more precise: a suicidal confession. 'No one answers for anything.' That's the way it always is when a single person wants to answer for everyone."<sup>2</sup> The main reason for disarray in the economy and irresponsibility in production is the political regime established in the country, about which Stalin says not a word. However, independent of his desires, the words about "fearing the truth" expose fully the essence of this regime.

"Since when did Bolsheviks begin to fear the truth?" Since the time when the dull, soulless, empty-headed Stalinist apparatus stifled the faction of Bolshevik-Leninists. ... Having routed the Left Opposition, the Stalinist bureaucracy has suffocated the party ... Inside the apparatus itself the fear of a lower functionary before his superior has reached such a degree of tension, that no one dares to look directly at facts and pass above what he has noticed. The lower links sing along and voice their agreement with their superiors, and the higher links perceive this servile chorus and the cooing of yes-men as the voice of life itself."<sup>3</sup>

For Bolsheviks to stop being afraid to speak the truth, it is necessary to restore party and soviet democracy, and to place the problems of the economy in their full scope for discussion by the party

and the trade unions.

As for the economic problems, Trotsky turned his attention to Stalin's words that the "principles of cost-accounting have been completely undermined ... A number of enterprises and economic organizations have long ago ceased to compute, calculate, and compile sound balances of income and expenditure."<sup>4</sup> In these words Trotsky detected a virtual acknowledgment that the administrative-bureaucratic system of managing the economy was unsuitable. Trotsky wrote:

"Calculation, which was never ideal before, because the Soviet state had only begun to learn how to keep proper accounts on a state-wide scale, has been completely cast aside since bureaucratic management replaced Marxist analysis of the economy and flexible adjustment with naked administrative pressure. The coefficients of growth have become a question of bureaucratic prestige. Is there room for calculation here? The hero is that director or chairman of a trust who has 'fulfilled and over-fulfilled' the plan, having plundered the budget and placed a mine, in the form of poor quality of production, under neighboring branches of the economy. In contrast, the economic manager who has tried to combine all the elements of production correctly, but who has not pushed for the sacred bureaucratic records, has usually ended up in the ranks of the penalized."<sup>5</sup>

Trotsky then deals with the problem of the turnover in the workforce, the scale of which can be seen in Stalin's acknowledgment that at the majority of enterprises, the composition of workers over the course of six months, or even three, changed by at least 30–40 percent. The Soviet worker, as Stalin declared, "feels himself to be a 'visitor' at the factory, working only temporarily in order to 'moonlight' a bit and then go somewhere else to 'seek good fortune.'"<sup>6</sup> Commenting on these forced confessions, Trotsky revealed their true meaning: the general movement of the working masses from factory to factory signifies that "*the situation of the workers* — and this must be said honestly, clearly and openly — *has become extraordinarily worse over the recent period.*"<sup>7</sup> Turnover is an anarchic reaction to the excess of administrative pressure, given that it is completely impossible for workers to improve their situation at the factory by normal means, i.e., through the trade unions. It means an enormous squandering of creative forces, the senseless loss of time for the workers both as they go from factory to factory, from city to city, and as they endure the painful process of adapting to new conditions of work. "Such is one of the main reasons for the low productivity of labor and the high costs of production. But the main danger in the turnover — the search for good fortune! — lies in the moral exhaustion of the proletariat."<sup>8</sup>

Having declared that the main reason for turnover was the "leveling" of wages, Stalin added that "economizing in the organization of wages, which should give credit to the qualification of the worker," ... "means to commit a crime, to go against the interests of our socialist industry."<sup>9</sup>

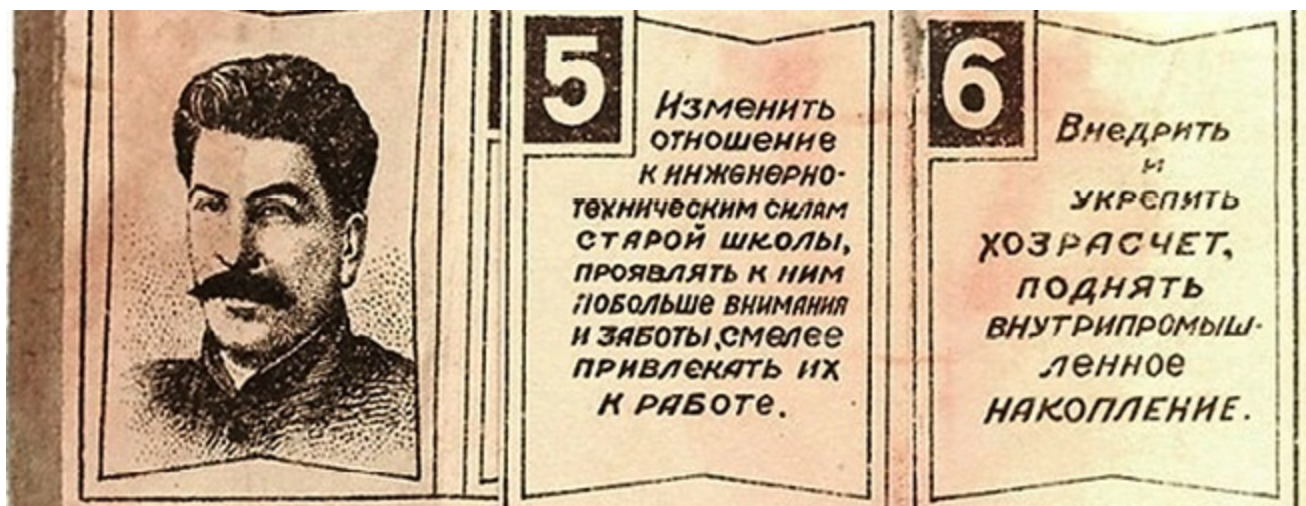
Noting that about 90 percent of Stalin's new economic program amounted to restoration of piecework pay, Trotsky wrote that the methods of distribution established in the first years of the Five-Year Plan were bad in all respects. Having canceled the NEP, the bureaucracy had replaced a flexible, differentiated evaluation of labor with "bonuses" in kind, essentially meaning bureaucratic capriciousness. Commercial exchange was replaced by "closed distributors." Combined with complete chaos in the realm of prices, arbitrarily set in various distribution systems, any correspondence between individual labor and individual wages was eliminated, thereby killing the personal interest of the producer. Under these conditions, the strictest demands raised earlier about



practicing cost-accounting, raising the productivity of labor and the quality of production, and lowering cost of production — all were left hanging in mid-air. Therefore it would be doctrinaire thinking to protest in principle against restoring the piecework wage system that had been prematurely canceled.

However, placing hope exclusively on the piecework wage system would not solve economic problems, but give birth to new problems of a social character. The nearest consequence of the new policy in the realm of wages would be the rise of a worker aristocracy. However:

“The tradition of Bolshevism is a tradition of fighting against aristocratic castes in the working class ... The program of the Stalinist bureaucracy fatally leads it to the necessity of resting on an ever more privileged workers’ aristocracy.”<sup>10</sup>



*A mini-booklet with Stalin’s “Six Conditions.”*

*Condition 5: “Change our attitude toward the engineers and technicians of the old school, to show them greater attention and care, to draw them into the work more boldly.” Condition 6: “Introduce and reinforce cost-accounting, and increase accumulation within industry.”*

Trotsky pointed out that the new system of wages, much like the previous one, had been proclaimed to be a “personal discovery.” Meanwhile, a vital and progressive system of wage payment could be developed only with the participation of the workers themselves. This participation, however, had been replaced by the participation of the trade-union bureaucracy, which was no better than any other. The instruments of organizing the payment of wages — collective agreements and tariff networks that previously had served as the subject of discussion between workers and the administration of enterprises — now was being worked out in offices and being imposed on the workers. Therefore a rational organization of wages necessarily demanded the restoration of workers’ self-management and trade-union democracy.

In evaluating the notorious “Six Conditions of Stalin” as a whole, Trotsky came to the conclusion that Stalin’s zigzags, continuously amounting to attempts to build socialism by bureaucratic means,

“cost dearly, and at every new point, ever more dearly ... Stalin’s new zigzag, regardless of how it turns out in the short-term, will inevitably lead to new and ever more acute contradictions at the next stage of development.”<sup>11</sup>

No less serious contradictions had matured in agriculture, in connection with the transition from the retreat of 1930 to a second, concluding round of forced collectivization.

- [1.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13, pp. 62–63 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, pp. 64–65].
- [2.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1931, № 23, p. 7 [Cf.: “A New Zigzag and New Dangers,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, p. 289].
- [3.](#) *Ibid.* [*Ibid.*, pp. 289–90].
- [4.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13, pp. 74–75 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, pp. 76–77].
- [5.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1931, № 23, p. 4 [Cf.: “A New Zigzag and New Dangers,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, p. 282].
- [6.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13, pp. 55–57 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, p. 58].
- [7.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1931, № 23, p. 5 [Cf.: “A New Zigzag and New Dangers,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, p. 284].
- [8.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 7 [*Ibid.*, p. 288].
- [9.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13, p. 58 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, p. 60].
- [10.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1931, № 23, p. 7 [Cf.: “A New Zigzag and New Dangers,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, pp. 288–289].
- [11.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 8 [*Ibid.*, p. 291].



**БАТРАКИ и  
КОМСОМОЛЬЦЫ,  
НА ТРАКТОР!**



**В УДАРНЫЕ КОЛОННЫ  
ВЕСЕННЕГО СЕВА!**

*Poster from 1931, urging farm laborers and komsomol members to “get on their tractor” and “join the shock-brigade columns of the spring sowing campaign.”*

# 27. The Second Round of Collectivization and its Results

After the article, “Dizziness from Success,” which hypocritically declared the end of forced collectivization, decrees were passed about economic taxation, sharply differentiating between taxes on the collective farms, collective farmers and individual farmers. The goal this time was to drive the individual farmers into the collectives “by economic means.”

In 1931, the non-taxable minimum was canceled for individual farmers, i.e., the minimal amount of yearly income which was tax-exempt. Thus, now even the poorest peasants, who had refused to join the kolkhoz, were supposed to pay an agricultural tax. In the same year, a new tax was introduced — on the income of individual farmers, derived from selling their own produce on the market, income that previously had not been considered. Then the legislative regulation of individual taxation was eliminated; establishing the categories of kulak farms subject to such taxation was given to the republic and *oblast* organs of power, which opened a broad road to despotic behavior in charging taxes.

In 1931, the amount of taxes on kulak households was more than doubled in comparison with the previous year. In that year, in calculations for one household, the individual farmer paid a tax that was ten times larger than a kolkhoznik, whereas a kulak paid 140 times more. As a result, the kolkhozes and kolkhozniks, comprising 58.6 percent of peasant farms, paid 24.6 percent of the overall sum of the village tax; the individual farmers (40.5 percent of the farms) paid 60 percent of this sum; and less than 1 percent of the farms, described as kulak households and subject to individual taxation, paid 15.3 percent of the total.

In addition to this, a new impulse was given to administrative collectivization. A directive letter of the CC, “On Collectivization,” sent out in September 1930, demanded that “a new and powerful rise in the kolkhoz movement be achieved.” The December 1930 Plenum of the CC and CCC approved control figures which stipulated that, in 1931, no less than half of the peasant farms needed to be collectivized.

In the fall of 1930, the resettlement of dekulakized peasants was renewed. A commission was formed in March 1931, headed by Andrei A. Andreev, for the coordination of large-scale operations of deporting “kulaks.” In May, the commission adopted a resolution to resettle 60,000 families in Kazakhstan, and 50,000 in the Northern Urals. Following this, a secret decree of the TsIK and SNK was adopted about organizing special settlements for kulak families “in localities affected by a shortage of the workforce for logging, for clearing the land and developing mines, for fisheries, and so forth.”<sup>1</sup> Those deported to these settlements were subject to strict administrative surveillance. The administration of the special settlements was assigned to the Gulag and OGPU.

In 1931, the scale of the deportation of families categorized as kulaks sharply increased compared



to the preceding year. In 1930, the number of families resettled in distant regions was 115,200; in 1931, it was 266,000. Altogether, 569,000 families were dekulakized in 1930–1931, of which 381,000 were sent to distant regions. The mass resettlement of dekulakized peasants was halted in the spring of 1932. By the beginning of 1933, there were 1,317,000 people in the special settlements.

By the beginning of the second round of dekulakization, in the villages there were no longer any kulaks as a social group exploiting other people's labor. Therefore, to justify his repressive policy, Stalin introduced into the party's lexicon such extremely vague concepts as "the kulak-like, well-off, upper layer of the village," and "*podkulachnik*" [sub-kulak — a peasant allegedly acting in the interests of the kulaks]. The political aim of introducing the latter term was to be able to classify any protest against the violence and despotism in the countryside as an attack by "an agent of the kulak." At the same time, new waves of repression were unleashed, descending on local party and soviet officials who had failed to discover in their regions the percentage of farms, designated from above, that were subject to dekulakization.

The new round of violence toward the peasantry provoked an outburst of active anti-kolkhoz fighting in response. In 1931, an enormous number of incidents were recorded, including attacks on kolkhoz grain wagons; the burning of grain; poisoning of livestock and destruction of machinery in the kolkhozes; terrorist acts against the kolkhoz activists and grain procurement forces. Once again, a large number of uprisings flared up. The Basmachi movement in Central Asia came to life, supported by the intervention of armed detachments from abroad.

The tax regimen and punitive measures led to an over-fulfillment of the designated objectives of collectivization. In September 1931, almost 60 percent of peasant farms were counted in the kolkhozes. However, even the official press acknowledged that many kolkhozes were "inflated," "on paper only," and "fake kolkhozes."

In evaluating the results of complete collectivization, the Left Opposition primarily saw the full destruction of the economic "alliance" [*smychka*] between town and country, the establishment of which Lenin considered to be the main task of the New Economic Policy. Trotsky wrote:

"The theoretical formulation of the alliance was very simple: nationalized industry must provide the peasants with the products they need, in such quantity, of such quality, and at such prices as to entirely eliminate or reduce to a minimum, in the relations between the state and the main peasant masses, the factor of non-economic compulsion, that is, the administrative seizure of the products of peasant labor."<sup>2</sup>

The establishment of voluntary and mutually beneficial commodity exchange between industry and agriculture, and of equivalent prices for their production, would guarantee the social and political stability of Soviet society and would create the economic foundations on which it would be possible to confidently carry the economic work forward.

"Under 'complete collectivization,' have such mutual relations between town and country been secured, under which non-economic compulsion, if it has not been reduced to nothing, then clearly is being reduced to nothing? This is the main issue. And for now it is necessary to give a negative response to this fundamental question. Complete collectivization has not been so much the crowning achievement and development of the alliance that has been achieved, but the administrative concealment of its absence."<sup>3</sup>

The problem of the alliance, in light of the experience of forced collectivization, was addressed in the article, “At a New Turning Point,” sent to the *Bulletin* by a group of oppositionists from Moscow and Leningrad. It noted that the Stalinist leadership was trying to remove Lenin’s understanding of the alliance from the party’s memory. The essence of the alliance consisted in this:

“In exchange for his grain the peasant should receive industrial goods under conditions not worse than those that existed under capitalism: such is the lower boundary of the alliance. Of course, the alliance will be much more solid and reliable if (and when) Soviet industry begins to provide its products to the peasantry in exchange for grain and so forth under conditions more beneficial than, not only the conditions of pre-revolutionary Russia, but under today’s conditions of the world market.”<sup>4</sup>

This is the way that the Left Opposition always understood the problem of the alliance. For this reason, it brought to the forefront the problem of the scissors in industrial and agricultural prices.

“In the spread of the scissors we saw the most important criterion for the success or failure of the Soviet economy ... The task is for it to be profitable for the peasant to produce as much as possible and save as much as possible from the things he produces, to be able to sell them, i.e., to exchange them for the goods of state industry.”<sup>5</sup>

The solving of this task would have automatically improved the food supply of the cities, not to mention the villages in the countryside. However, the bureaucracy declared that the task of the alliance had been solved by the very fact of collectivizing the majority of peasant farms, and therefore that there was no need to raise this subject any more. Under the guise of this demagoguery, the forced requisition of produce from the kolkhozes was carried out, and the foundations of the planned development of the entire national economy were undermined.

The author of the article, “Hangover from the ‘Economic October,’” writing under the pseudonym “Tonov,” said the following:

“In the bureaucratic mind, the basic problem of our revolution was solved very easily: in three years liquidate the kulaks as a class, i.e., ruin them and drive them into the taiga; meanwhile, collectivize the enormous mass of the poorest peasants and middle peasants in the same time period by administrative and bureaucratic means. And the problem of the alliance is already solved: what has been created is ‘a unified and more or less harmonious socialist economy.’ Not long ago, that is how the majority of Stalinist functionaries of small, middle, and major caliber reasoned — if they reasoned at all ... These seductive illusions, created by bureaucratic stupidity, have vanished into thin air.”<sup>6</sup>

The article’s author stressed that only 15 to 20 percent of the kolkhozes could be seen as more or less organized farms, i.e., those in which the organization of production, the technology, and the productivity of labor were at least somewhat higher than in the individual farms from which they were formed. The fundamental mass of the kolkhozes “are in a chaotic and semi-chaotic state; the productivity of labor on these farms is lower than the average level of the productivity of labor on an individual peasant farm; moreover, they are gradually consuming the modest inventory which remained at their disposal after the collective fever.”<sup>7</sup> Such a state of the kolkhozes is explained by the monstrous overestimation by Stalin and his functionaries of the role played by administrative measures in the matter of reconstructing the countryside. Now the bureaucrats, “firmly believing in the omnipotence of the administrative stick,” are trying to lay blame for the failure of their policy on the ‘muzhik.’”

“‘The muzhik has let us down!’ — in recent times this phrase often escapes the lips of the sighing functionary ... ‘The muzhik usually doesn’t want to join the collective, he is stubborn; but we will put the screws to him and force him to work in the

collective!’ — this often-repeated phrase expresses the entire narrow-minded wisdom of the Stalinist bureaucrat.”<sup>8</sup>

However, no intensification of repressions of any kind could force the peasant to work effectively in the kolkhoz, where the entire organization of labor was based on administrative compulsion. “The ‘muzhik’ proved to be more stubborn and more steadfast than Radek and Pyatakov (capitulators who displayed an eagerness to confess their “mistakes” – *V. R.*),” the author of the article concluded his analysis.

“Under the threat of the stick he neither ‘saw the light’ nor understood the desirability of collectivization; he was more likely to become befuddled. Therefore, he has lost the stimulus for work: he sows badly, he is even worse at harvesting; at the first opportunity he ‘escapes’ from the kolkhoz.”<sup>9</sup>

Similar statements were found in other letters from the USSR published in the *Bulletin* in 1932. “In the kolkhozes, the process of disintegration is developing. The peasants are running off to the cities, looking for work; the kolkhozes, meanwhile, are short-handed.”<sup>10</sup> “The grandiose utopia of complete collectivization of the peasantry in two to three years has suffered an equally grandiose defeat. This fact is entering ever more into the consciousness of the entire country.”<sup>11</sup>

In summarizing the views of the Left Opposition with regard to the results of complete collectivization, Trotsky wrote that the countryside had met the most destructive consequences of Stalin’s adventurist policy that had stretched out over several years.

“Twenty-five million isolated peasant egoisms, which yesterday had been the sole motive forces of agriculture — weak, like an old farmer’s nag, but nevertheless motive forces — the bureaucracy tried to replace at one stroke by the commands of two hundred thousand collective-farm administrative offices, lacking technical equipment, agronomic knowledge and the support of the peasants themselves.”<sup>12</sup>

The immediate result of collectivization became the indifference of the collective farmers toward socialized property and toward the results of their own labor.

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1. *Neizvestnaia Rossiia, XX vek*, M., 1992, pp. 257–258.

2. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 28, p. 17 [Cf.: “‘The Foundations of Socialism,’ (A Foolish Man on a Serious Subject),” *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1932), p. 89].

3. *Ibid.* [Ibid., pp. 89–90].

4. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 29–30, p. 2.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 21.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

11. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 28, p. 2.

12. L. D. Trotskii, *Predannaia revoliutsiia*, p. 36 [Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, Labor Publications, 1991, p. 34].

# 28. Inequality, Poverty, Speculation

Facing stiff resistance by the peasantry to administrative pressure, Stalin was forced to make concessions to the peasants. On 27 March 1932, the Central Committee published a decree “On the Forced Collectivization of Livestock.” In it, all party, soviet and collective-farm organizations were obliged to assist collective farmers in purchasing and raising an individual herd. Now the task of the party was seen as making sure that “each collective farmer had his own cow, small herd, and fowl.”<sup>1</sup>

Following this decree, more decrees of the TsIK and SNK were published in May, lowering the plan of grain and livestock procurements by a factor of two for the kolkhozes, collective farmers and individual farmers. After the fulfillment of these plans, trade was allowed at markets without price regulation. At the same time, all restrictions on the slaughter of livestock were lifted. One more serious concession to the peasants was the cancellation of all republic and local taxes collected when the kolkhozes, collective farmers, and individual farmers sold their produce at markets, railway stations, and so forth. Local councils were instructed to greatly lower the rental rates on buildings provided for such trade. Taxes on the income from the sale by peasants of produce were canceled, as well as the limits of market prices that had impaired free trade.

While not leading to the pacification of the villages, all these measures struck hard at the city population by causing a sharp rise in prices at the markets. The index of urban market prices for agricultural products in 1932 exceeded by 6.6 times the prices of 1930, and by 13.3 times the prices of 1928. These prices substantially exceeded the purchasing power of the workers. With the average wage of a worker amounting to 125 rubles per month (without various deductions), a pood of flour at the markets cost sixty to eighty rubles; 400 grams of butter cost ten rubles; ten eggs — seven rubles; and a liter of milk — two to three rubles.

In an attempt to reduce the food shortages in the cities, the bureaucracy waged a campaign for workers to obtain their own food supplies: to acquire gardens, cows, chickens, etc. The press set about stigmatizing “bunglers” who “do not understand that such work at home previously tied the worker to capitalism, but now ties him to the Soviet order.”<sup>2</sup>

One more measure aimed at mitigating the food-supply crisis was the creation at factories of their own sources of produce: factory gardens and cattle-breeding farms. Khrushchev recalled that in 1932, when there was a “golodukha” [lack of food] in Moscow, Stalin ordered that every factory and plant raise rabbits. Workplaces began to create rabbit farms “wherever possible, and, unfortunately, where it was not possible.” With the same goal in mind, factories built cellars and trenches for growing mushrooms. Soon people started calling these “*gribnitsy*” [mushroom cellars] — “*grobnnitsy*” [tombs].<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, a campaign was launched to create small workshops at the gigantic factories of heavy industry to produce goods for popular consumption. In describing this innovation, the authors of the collective article, “At a New Turning Point,” wrote:



“The directors of factories, technical personnel and the communist cells are perhaps most of all compelled to wrack their brains over how, in the given production process, to create a second, and in a certain sense, parasitic production. An automobile factory makes spoons and forks, or clothes-brushes, or axes, and so forth.”<sup>4</sup>

The parasitic character of “emergency agriculture attached to the factories” and of “secondary production attached to main production” was seen by the authors in the fact that these handicraft branches not only were conducted outside the plan, but even undermined it, insofar as they were created and maintained at the expense of the means and resources designated according to the plan for core production.

One more economic innovation was the opening in 1931 of commercial stores. In the retail turnover of agricultural and industrial goods, the relative weight of commercial trade grew from 3 percent in 1931 to 24 percent in 1934. The remaining portion of the reserves of retail sales was distributed according to [ration] cards and through a system of closed distribution centers.

In 1932, commercial prices exceeded those of (ration) cards by 7.7 times; in 1933, by 12–15 times. A kilogram of bread, sold freely, cost 20–30 times more than a kilogram of rationed bread. A kilogram of sausage in commercial stores was sold for twenty-five rubles, meat for sixteen to eighteen rubles, and butter for forty to forty-five rubles. Such a price policy forced citizens to spend their last savings to obtain food products in short supply. It was a particularly cruel blow to those layers of the population who were removed from rationed provisions. The reduction of contingents having the right to receive ration cards proceeded systematically.

In addition to commercial stores, Torgsin stores were opened, where trade was conducted for precious metals and hard currency. The introduction of the Torgsin system created advantageous conditions for “entrepreneurial people” who were engaged in currency speculation. A correspondent of the *Bulletin* reported:

“Visitors (foreigners) are everywhere being offered rubles for ‘a good price,’ from eight to ten rubles per dollar. We are told that in some instances people pay even forty rubles per dollar. Inflation, various price levels, various systems of food allowances — all this gives birth in everyday life to phenomena of duplicity, cheating, contraband and demoralization.”<sup>5</sup>

Along with the growth of market and commercial prices, standardized prices also rose, particularly after the increase in 1931 of the tax collected from the exchange of commodities from light industry.

Despite the palpable decline in the living conditions of workers everywhere, in “party documents,” the state of popular well-being was depicted, as before, in boastful and optimistic tones. A resolution of the Seventeenth Conference of the VKP(b) in February 1932 stated that, in the Soviet Union:

“The national income is growing at tempos that are unachievable in capitalist countries; unemployment and poverty (pauperism) have been eliminated; the ‘price scissors’ is being eliminated, as is the contradiction between town and country; the well-being and cultural level of the workers and laboring peasants is growing from year to year; mortality is falling and the population of the USSR is rapidly growing.”<sup>6</sup>

In exposing these radiant assertions, the “Riutin Platform” stated that the construction of new factories and plants had occurred at the expense of expropriating a significant portion of workers’

wages by raising prices; through various kinds of loans, taxes, and membership dues; and, to an even greater degree, at the expense of the expropriation of the overall masses of the countryside. The “Platform” stressed that in 1932 the real wages of the worker comprised not more than one-fourth the real wages in 1927. “For whole weeks at a time, the worker sees neither a gram of meat, butter or milk; for an arshin [0.711 m.] of calico, he must stand in lines for many hours; there is no place to buy a fork, glass or spoon.”<sup>7</sup> Drawing additional workers into production (at a cost of raising the number of family members working) did not cover the enormous fall in real income for working-class families.

The “Riutin Platform” gave an even more negative description of the situation for the laboring population in the countryside. It emphasized that during the years of collectivization, the price scissors for industrial and agricultural products had grown enormously.

“The peasant receives a pittance for his produce at standard procurement prices: from one ruble fifty kopecks to two rubles for a pood of grain, and he pays for a meter of calico the same one ruble fifty kopecks ... In the villages, grain, meat, wool, leather, flax, chickens, eggs, and so forth are taken away for next to nothing; all this is carted off to starving cities and exported at half price abroad. The countryside has been turned into the worst form of colony. There are no products in the villages; at the same time, there is nothing left to make homespun clothing and footwear, for flax, wool, and leather have been taken away, and livestock have been slaughtered or have died off because of poor tending and lack of feed.

“There has become an acute shortage of bast shoes and sandals. As a result, the entire countryside is clothed in rags and tatters. On average, the collective farmer is paid fifteen to twenty kopecks per workday unit, which, when translated into gold rubles, means two to three kopecks. The countryside at the present time is an utter graveyard.”

Stalin’s adventuristic policy had led to the depopulation of the countryside, and it caused healthy and able-bodied village inhabitants to flee to the cities. In conditions of the unrelenting impoverishment of the peasantry, “not only could 100,000 tractors fail to convince the villages of the advantages of communal (i.e., socialized, collective-farm – *V. R.*) agriculture, but a number that was several times greater would fail as well.”<sup>8</sup>

The “Platform” concluded that “in reality, we presently are incomparably further away from socialist society than we were in 1926–1927.”<sup>9</sup>

These unbiased observations convincingly refute the favorite thesis of contemporary “democrats” that Stalin expressed the interests of new layers of the uneducated and de-politicized working class formed in the years of the first Five-Year Plan, and that the “lumpen who yearned for egalitarianism”<sup>10</sup> had become the social base of support for Stalin’s regime. In actuality, it was precisely on these new layers of the Soviet working class, making up its least skilled segment, that the burden of Stalin’s repressive labor legislation fell particularly heavily, as it relentlessly toughened the sanctions for “violations of labor discipline.” A decree of the TsIK and SNK from 15 November 1932 set the following punishment for one day’s absence at work without a valid excuse: immediate dismissal; loss of the right to use ration cards for food and industrial goods; eviction from any apartment belonging to the workplace. The standard of living for unskilled layers of the working class was shockingly low, which could not have failed to have an effect on their everyday social well-being. As he conveyed his impressions from visiting Dneprostroi, a correspondent of the *Bulletin* wrote:

“Only the smallest number of workers inhabits the new buildings and lives in tolerable human conditions. The rest live in barracks. They live in filth, semi-darkness, in the cold of winter, with poor food. Their faces are gloomy, and one senses not only dissatisfaction, but even despair. It is impossible to exist like that for long.”<sup>[11](#)</sup>

The author expressively described the actual attitude of the bureaucracy toward “backward” workers, i.e., to unskilled layers of the working class who had come to the factories from the villages.

“I think that there is not a single more acute form of inequality than the inequality between one who is simply well-fed and one who is simply hungry. The bureaucracy among us is well-fed, well-dressed, and lives in warm and well-lighted buildings. Millions of workers, however, live in barracks in simply animal conditions, and this has been going on for years. In response to the needs of the worker, to his complaints about hunger, and to his discontent, the bureaucrat replies: this is not a class-conscious worker, this is yesterday’s peasant.”<sup>[12](#)</sup>

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<sup>1.</sup> *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh*, vol. 5, p. 406.

<sup>2.</sup> *Pravda*, 3 October 1932.

<sup>3.</sup> *Znamia*, 1989, № 9, pp. 14–15.

<sup>4.</sup> *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1932, № 29–30, p. 3.

<sup>5.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>6.</sup> *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh*, vol. 5, p. 392.

<sup>7.</sup> *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 368.

<sup>8.</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 367–368.

<sup>9.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

<sup>10.</sup> *Druzhba narodov*, 1989, № 5, p. 214.

<sup>11.</sup> *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1933, № 35, p. 26.

<sup>12.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

# 29. Inequality, Privileges, and Luxury

Under conditions of the horrifying poverty of the vast majority of workers, the bureaucracy stubbornly tried to separate out privileged layers of the working class and collective-farm peasants in order to strengthen the social base of its regime. In the first years of the Five-Year Plan, the “shock workers” [*udarniki*] became such a privileged layer. While describing the growing inequality, not only between the bureaucracy and the working class, but also within the working class, a correspondent of the *Bulletin* provided examples of privileges that shock workers received in the form of provisions in kind.

“At the factory, two workers work side by side, having the same profession, the same qualification and rating, but one of them is a shock worker, and the other is a ‘simple’ worker. The shock worker not only receives first and foremost materials being produced, but also a ration, and a more adequate ration at that. At several enterprises, things have become so bad that there are two cafeterias: one a bit better for shock workers, and one a bit worse for ‘simple’ workers.”<sup>1</sup>

Such a practice was widely defended, not only by the press, but by higher party leaders. In a speech at a conference of Moscow party activists, Kaganovich brought up the ideological basis for the privileges of the “shock workers” in the following way. He told about his conversation with a worker who had asked the question: “Why have they given a coat to a shock worker, but to me, a non-shock worker, they don’t give one?” “Well, if you join a shock-work brigade, they’ll give you one,” Kaganovich replied. In citing this example, Kaganovich dramatically declared: “You see how a backward worker, who is not interested in the shock-worker movement, should have thought about what the shock-worker movement is, and how he might come closer to it. This is without question an enormous factor in raising productivity and in re-educating backward workers.” “That the coat is an ‘enormous factor’, especially in the winter, is beyond any doubt,” the letter’s author ironically noted in commenting on these words, “but that its current designation will not protect his perishable body from severe cold, yet, don’t you see, will ‘re-educate the backward workers’ — this can be placed in doubt. Bureaucratic thinking can lead anywhere.”<sup>2</sup>

During the first years of the Five-Year Plan, inequality was also expressed in the creation of closed distribution centers and cooperatives, access to which was strictly arranged according to social status. A correspondent of the *Bulletin* reported that there were three basic categories of cooperatives: for industrial workers, for non-industrial workers, and for office workers. Besides this, “there exists a number of closed distribution centers: for diplomats (unlimited), for foreign specialists, for major bureaucrats and so forth. All this is differentiated according to ranks and posts.”<sup>3</sup>

Insofar as money was losing its function as a universal equivalent, under conditions of a chronic commodity shortage, the ration-card system, and various systems of closed supply, one of the letters reported that, upon arriving at work, “no one is interested in the pay. The first question: ‘Is there a



distribution center? What kind?’ However, even in such distribution places there is almost nothing; the only exception is for the narrowest circle.”<sup>4</sup>

The restoration of free trade at bazaars and the opening of commercial stores meant the “rehabilitation of the ruble,” an increased role of wages in the differentiation of the material situation of various social strata. At the same time, there was a sharp rise in the differences of wage levels, which in the years of NEP had been consciously restrained by government policy. In 1926–1927, the established maximum yearly income exceeded by 3.5 times the average yearly income of an unskilled worker. Only 0.3 percent of people receiving a wage had such a maximum. After the appearance of Stalin’s “Six Conditions,”

limitations in the differentiation of wages were eliminated.

1931 saw the abolition, on the one hand, of the law prohibiting the payment of those engaged in piecework of less than two-thirds of the average wage-level, and, on the other hand, of the law allowing a worker exceeding production norms to receive above the rate no more than 100 percent of the usual standard of pay.

Then the law was abolished allowing specialists who combined jobs (a practice that was widespread at the time) to receive only one and a half times more than the established maximum wage. This measure was a component part of Stalin’s new policy with regard to the intelligentsia. In 1931, as one of his “six conditions,” Stalin called for the creation, “for the core of the commanding staff of our industry,” of “appropriate conditions [of work], without sparing any money for this.”<sup>5</sup> In recounting how this slogan was being implemented in practice, the correspondent of the *Bulletin* noted that the technical intelligentsia “is being transformed into a higher, privileged category, standing above the worker and collective farmer, and drawing closer to the party and soviet bureaucracy.”<sup>6</sup>

In the formation of new privileged groups, the gradual cancellation of the party maximum played an important role. In 1920, a decree was adopted by the VTsIK, establishing a single fixed wage scale for all communists, including party, soviet, trade-union and economic leaders. The maximum level of their income was not supposed to exceed the wages of a highly-skilled worker. Limiting the income of communists by a definite ceiling was continued in the first years of the NEP. Thus, in 1924, the director of a factory who was a communist received 187.9 rubles per month, while the same director who was not a party member received 309.5 rubles. Highly paid communists were obligated to deduct a certain portion of their pay for the mutual-aid fund for party members in great need. A decree of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) on 7 May 1928 set the party maximum at 2700 rubles per year. This, however, did not mean that a party member could not earn more than this sum, for instance, by receiving author’s royalties. But then he was obligated to hand over to the party’s funds 20 percent “of the first 2700 ruble-surplus” (i.e., of the sum exceeding the party maximum), 30 percent of the sum in surplus between 2700 and 5400 rubles, and 40 percent of the sum in surplus above 5400 rubles.

In actual fact, the cancellation of the party maximum occurred at the end of 1929, but officially it was abolished by a secret decree of the Politburo on 8 February 1932. Even Eugen Varga, who occupied high party posts in the 1920s and 1930s, recalled that he did not know when the party

maximum was canceled, and all Stalinist and post-Stalinist textbooks of party history remained silent about its very existence. However, he stressed in no uncertain terms that, after the cancellation of the party maximum in the 1930s, “a radical differentiation of Soviet society began which depended on income. One after another — in accordance with their significance for Stalin’s regime — privileged layers became distinct.”<sup>7</sup>

During all its zigzags, the social policy of Stalinism continued to use the economic foundations laid down by the October Revolution, in the interests of privileged groups in society. The ideological justification of this policy was the declaration that “distribution according to labor” was not an expression of bourgeois law in the transitional period from capitalism to socialism, as Marx and Lenin had believed, but “a basic principle of socialism.” It is characteristic that, after Stalin’s death, every subsequent leader of the party, while mercilessly criticizing the policy and ideological dogmas of his predecessor, maintained the inviolability of this main “theoretical” postulate of Stalinism.

Under conditions where proportions in the payment of labor were centrally regulated by the state, the defense of “distribution according to labor” served to guarantee the elevated pay of those categories of officials who turned out to be most “needed” for the stability and consolidation of the ruling regime.

The Left Opposition proceeded from the fact that, after the victory of the socialist revolution, social equality could not be achieved in a single leap forward. Trotsky noted that inequality in the form of differentiated wages, bonuses and so forth is dictated by the interests of developing the productive forces and objectively serves, in the transitional period, “as a bourgeois instrument of socialist progress.”<sup>8</sup> The government itself remains necessary, after the liquidation of exploiting classes, precisely because bourgeois norms of distribution still continue to operate. The bureaucracy serves as an organ of this distribution. This means that even a revolutionary bureaucracy remains to a certain degree a bourgeois organ in the state during the transitional period. Decisive in evaluating the social nature of society, however, is not the static, but the dynamic nature of social relations, i.e., the basic tendency or direction of the social development of society: does it develop toward equality or toward the growth of privileges?

It was precisely this course of argumentation that was characteristic for the “Testament” written at the beginning of the 1960s by Eugen Varga, one of the thinking Marxists who remained in the USSR, but were not poisoned by Stalinist social demagogy. Varga, who had been a Hungarian revolutionary in the past, and who was an emigré in the USSR from the 1920s, became a Soviet academician and the creator of a scientific school studying the world economy and world politics. The notes written before his death are reflections on the causes of the social degeneration of Soviet society.

Varga presented two objections to the main arguments of the defenders of “the basic principle of socialism” — according to which more productive labor should, according to Marx, be paid more highly, and that skilled labor surpasses unskilled labor “many times over” in its significance for society. First of all, Marx never said precisely how long the transition from “payment according to labor” to communism [payment according to need] should last; but in any case he “was, of course, not

thinking of a period of forty-six years, when the end was not in sight.” Secondly, Marx left open the question of allowable discrepancies in the payment for the labor of different categories of workers. Commenting on Marx’s positions about unequal pay for unequal work, Lenin asserted that “comrades who have been freed from physical labor should receive twice as much as a skilled worker, but no more.” Meanwhile, at the start of the 1960s, “a worker at a state farm earned thirty to fifty rubles per month; an academician earned approximately one thousand rubles, i.e. twenty to fifty times more.”<sup>9</sup>

It is not hard to conclude that Varga, in proceeding from the basic propositions of Marxist-Leninist theory cleansed of Stalinist encrustations, came close in this question to the position of Trotsky, who had emphasized in the 1930s that “according to the conditions of everyday life, Soviet society is already divided into a secure and privileged minority and a majority that is vegetating in need; moreover, at the polar extremes, this inequality is characterized by outrageous contrasts.”<sup>10</sup>

Varga’s reflections also coincide with Trotsky’s positions, where he discusses the reasons why the elaboration of statistics concerning income and wealth differentiation was not undertaken in the USSR.

Trotsky stressed that the Stalinist bureaucracy, fearing the exposure of the real nature of existing social relations, camouflaged them with concepts taken from the socialist lexicon, and resorted not only to judicial, but also to statistical forgeries.

“One would think that, in a workers’ state, data about real wages would be studied with special care — indeed, that all statistics of income according to categories of the population would be distinguished by complete transparency and general accessibility. As a matter of fact, this whole question, which touches the most vital interests of the toilers, is surrounded with an impenetrable veil. The budget of the worker’s family in the Soviet Union, unbelievable as this may be, is a magnitude incomparably more mysterious for the investigator than in any capitalist country. ... The stubborn silence of the sources and authorities on this subject is as eloquent as their boasting about meaningless totals.”<sup>11</sup>

Total, as well as average, figures of wages, income, and so forth which Soviet statistics employ are arithmetical fictions, summoned to mask over cruel and ever-growing inequality in the standard of living. In civilized countries, this method has long been abandoned, insofar it is no longer able to deceive anyone.

A quarter century later, Eugen Varga also stated that the Soviet Union lacks statistics concerning the distribution of income in various layers of the population. Therefore, no one knows what the real income is for those who belong to the ruling stratum, the upper echelon of the bureaucracy; no one knows how great is the portion of the national income that the bureaucracy receives.<sup>12</sup>

Concealment of the data about social and property differentiation was designed to mask the sources of the unjustified inequality which basically amounted to the following:

(1) The quantity and quality of work, particularly in those spheres where it is difficult to develop criteria for its objective evaluation, were determined not by the trade unions and other organs of worker self-management, but by the bureaucracy, which of its own volition set the charges and job rates;

(2) labor was equal to social status, i.e., pay depending on the amount and skill of the labor was replaced by arbitrarily established status privileges.

These privileges were strictly ranked even within the milieu of the bureaucracy, i.e., they were set according to the formal rank of the apparatchik. In reporting about the significant increase in the party maximum, the correspondent of the *Bulletin* wrote:

“In addition, there are several ‘maximums’: the differentiation is very refined. For instance, a member of the Central Committee of a trade union receives less pay than a member of the Presidium of the same Central Committee. Meanwhile, both work side by side and at the identical important work. The same applies to receiving products: here among officials there are dozens of categories. All of this not only deepens the inequality, but creates an additional stimulus for moving up the bureaucratic ladder.”<sup>13</sup>

The propagation of strictly hierarchical privileges was designed to stamp out the moral principles of Bolshevism: an orientation to social equality; readiness to work selflessly and altruistically; whole-hearted commitment to the common cause; personal modesty and even a particular kind of asceticism; an attitude toward material benefits as a secondary factor in comparison with social and intellectual values. Instead, what became customary was: increased pay; supplemental rations distributed according to hierarchical categories; “special” sanatoriums and medical facilities; the settlement of the new elite in homes constructed according to special plans. All of these privileges grew like an avalanche precisely at a time when the bulk of the population was shouldering the burden of hunger, or a pitiful existence of semi-hunger. In economic conditions that in many ways resembled the conditions of the epoch of “war communism,” fundamentally different social relations and a fundamentally different ideology arose: the need for all members of society to share the hardships and deprivations generated by the country’s extreme economic situation was now seen as a display of “ultra-left,” “petty-bourgeois egalitarianism.”

A description and analysis of the processes connected with the struggle against “egalitarianism” became one of the leitmotifs of the letters published in 1932 in the *Bulletin of the Opposition*. One of its issues in that year published a special collection of letters under the rubric of “The Bureaucracy and the Struggle against Egalitarianism.” It stressed that the increase of inequality in living standards was sanctified by a special ideology which is “crippling and finishing off the old ideology. ‘Egalitarianism’ has become a subject of mockery. Wage-levelling is called nothing other than ‘kulak pay’ ... In this theory, the bureaucracy has found the first open and aggressive justification of its own privileged position. According to many observations, I assume that this side-product of the struggle against egalitarianism has very great significance in the sense of the further moral alienation of the bureaucratic layer from the working masses.”<sup>14</sup>

In the letters, attention was also paid to the fact that the uncontrolled conduct of the bureaucracy was combined with ever more open corruption.

“The bureaucracy and bureaucratism are not theoretical concepts, but social and everyday facts. The bureaucracy commands, i.e. it allows, prohibits, orders, does the thinking for all (and thinks poorly). The bureaucracy makes all appointments, and most often appoints ‘its own’ man. Nepotism, or *kumovstvo* [godfather favoritism] in Russian, is flourishing in the form of the most poisonous flowers.”<sup>15</sup>

The chasm between the living conditions of the new Soviet elite and the popular masses deepened especially during the years of the first Five-Year Plan, when Stalin’s methods of industrialization and



collectivization led to a sharp fall in the living standards of the working class and kolkhoz peasantry, let alone the “dekulakized” peasants, who were deprived of even the most necessary means of existence. It was precisely in the years of mass famine, which cost millions of lives, when the privileges of the “higher-ups” of the new Soviet hierarchy grew sharply. This included not only the upper layers of the party, soviet and economic bureaucracy, the command staff of the army and organs of the OGPU, but also the upper echelons of the scientific, technical and creative intelligentsia. These layers were bound to the Stalinist regime by enormous pay, bonuses, and closed distribution centers. The representatives of these layers began to live, in an everyday material sense, absolutely differently from the rest of the population, which bore the burden of the unheard-of economic difficulties that the country was experiencing.



*OGPU “Distribution Center № 1”*

The steady growth of inequality brought about dynamic changes in the way it was perceived, especially in privileged groups who were overjoyed by the possibility of freeing themselves from the Spartan limitations that had been in place during the first decade after the revolution. The creation of special living conditions formed a psychology of social exclusivity among the representatives of these groups, and eliminated egalitarian inclinations that had been characteristic in the past for the Russian democratic and revolutionary intelligentsia. In these conditions, only the most honest and courageous cultural figures realized that the striking disengagement of the protected groups from the people, in terms of their material living conditions, was the consequence of crude and open

corruption, paid for by sacrifices that were the most distressing for a genuine intellectual: servility and the loss of intellectual freedom. One cannot help but sense the initial breakthrough toward an understanding of this in the words spoken by Boris Pasternak at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934:

“If good fortune smiles on someone among us, we will be well-off (but let the wealth that drains a man’s spirit pass us by). ‘Do not break away from the masses,’ the party says in those instances. ... ‘Do not sacrifice one’s identity for the sake of status,’ I will say in absolutely the same sense as the party.”<sup>16</sup>

The majority of the population perceived the new differences in income and property with a feeling of profound indignation. One cannot agree with the contemporary sociologist Leonid Gordon, who smooths over the acuteness of this feeling when he asserts:

“Relationships in which practically all engineers and scientists received noticeably more than workers, and the latter — more than collective-farm workers; when the wages were higher at defense plants and for the commanding staff of the army than at civilian enterprises or in institutions of culture and service — these relationships were seen to be natural. As for the more arbitrary differences in the sphere of distribution that were privileged in nature, they were extended in those years to a very narrow circle of officials and were essentially outside the purview of the popular masses.”<sup>17</sup>

In fact, these “arbitrary differences” were observed with indignation by rank-and-file workers and, at the same time, with “understanding” by the bureaucrats who had been climbing up the career ladder, bathing in privileges and generously making presents of them at state expense to “distinguished people,” the prize-winners of innumerable political campaigns. Several aspects of such differing ways of perception are illustrated in the autobiographical novel by Aleksandr Avdeenko, *I Love*. The work presents a significant dialog between Bybochkin, the director of an industrial giant, and a young worker who has become famous in the course of a lavishly advertised campaign to “summon shock workers to literature.” Bybochkin “is worried, am I dressed and wearing the right shoes as I should be for a distinguished person? If only he greeted every worker in this way! ... It is easier to play up to a highly favored and exemplary person than to worry about everyone.”

The “ideology” of Bybochkin, as he reacts ecstatically to the social changes taking place in the country, clearly shows through in the conversation about the main gift being given by him to the “distinguished person”:

“I’ve prepared some family apartments. Three rooms with all the bells and whistles. Move in at once if you like!

- But isn’t that a bit much for just two people — whole apartments?

- You’ve earned it! One good turn deserves another! Our country knows how to value its heroes.

Look how kind he is at the people’s expense! I wonder how he’ll show off next? I ask:

- But what will people say who are living in barracks and mud huts when they find out that I have moved into a mansion?

- Cut out the modesty, my son! Great ships need deep waters.

- But what about conscience? Equality and brotherhood?

- Is that where you’re going? Have you begun to yearn for egalitarianism? I have to explain something to you. There was a time when we legally imposed wage-levelling both in production and in everyday life. They introduced the partmaximum for all communists, regardless of merit or capability ... Both the unskilled workers, and the metalworker, and the master, and the director were important persons ... We suffered from ultra-left excesses. The bosses straightened us out. Canceled the

partmaximum. Brought in one-man management, iron commands, red and black plaques, prizes, awards, supplemental rations. Now we soar to the top individually, not all together.”<sup>18</sup>

“Philosophy” of this kind spread with uncontrollable rapidity in layers accustomed to the official privileges. In unleashing vile elements in human nature, Stalin knew very well that “authorized,” strictly hierarchical privileges remove a feeling of social justice in the groups enjoying them, replacing it with a caste psychology of “being chosen,” of “being special,” and with a disdainful attitude toward “lower strata.” The social structure founded on privileges constantly singled out in lower social layers people who had strived, with their unquestioning servility and unthinking execution of the most savage and the cruelest actions dictated from above, to be worthy of “the right” to have access to power and the privileges connected with it. Stalin’s opening the gates widely for such “upward mobility” was a decisive factor in creating the conditions in 1936–1938 that allowed the replacement of practically the entire ruling layer, among whom there were still no small number of people raised on the ideas of Bolshevism, who rejected, even if without public protest, the new social and political relations. In its place came a young generation, lacking any ongoing ties to Bolshevik traditions and raised in the spirit of hierarchical, caste thinking and unlimited personal devotion to “the leader.”

In the absence of political principles, which appeared in the period of mass repression even among many old Bolsheviks, one cannot help but see a continuation of the lack of moral principles and of the everyday degeneration that was expressed in an amenability toward handouts given from above, and toward accepting them as something legitimate and deserved.

At the end of the 1980s, the majority of works devoted to a critique of Stalinism paid attention to its extremely cruel repressive side, but did not reveal its common, everyday appearance, expressed in striking social contrasts and in the existence of two diametrically opposed ways of life. In my view, this is bound up with the fact that the ideological tendencies that came to the surface in those years represented a semi-unconscious nostalgia for the social relations of Stalinism, with, of course, one substantial reservation. The bearers of these tendencies wished that the result of “perestroika” would be a society with a social differentiation that would be just as strong as it was under Stalin, but that would avoid Stalin’s repressive measures. At the same time, they stubbornly ignored the social causes of these repressive measures, which amounted to the urge to not simply restrain, but physically annihilate, those forces in the party and the nation who rejected the social foundations of Stalinism: sharp material inequality.

The ideological and psychological heritage of Stalinism was deeply rooted in the consciousness of those who, in the years of stagnation and “perestroika,” were inclined to cultivate moods of elitism, clannishness, and a caste mentality that had been widespread in Stalin’s time. The bearers of such sentiments usually explained the very yearning for social equality and justice as envy toward the material status of others. Behind the philippics against “the psychology of envy,” attention was not paid to the psychology of social exclusivity and arrogance regarding their own privileges, which was vividly described by Nadezhda Mandelstam in her memoirs:

“One young physicist ... was eating a steak that he had received at his father-in-law’s distribution center, and he began to boast: ‘This is tasty and especially nice because others don’t have it’ ... People were proud of the documents granting them supplemental rations, rights and privileges, and concealed their pay envelopes from lower categories.”<sup>19</sup>

A distinguishing feature of Stalinism, which had strictly stratified Soviet society, was the striving to conceal behind a veil of secrecy, away from the eyes of the unprivileged, the way of life of the upper layers, the isolated oases of luxury that had arisen amidst the wasteland of widespread destitution.

Official privileges, constituting the material base of Stalin’s social order, polarized society into a fundamental mass of people, limited in their legal rights, and a relatively small group of “special people” who had access to privileges. Above the diametrically opposed ways of life arose psychological superstructures that were just as opposed to each other. “The people do not like privileges,” wrote Nadezhda Mandelshtam.

“... In our epoch the hatred of those who are privileged has grown particularly acute, because even a piece of bread has always been a privilege. At the very least, during ten years of the first forty we used ration cards, and there was no egalitarianism even when it came to bread — some received nothing, others little, and still others, enough and some to spare. ‘We are having a famine,’ Evgeny Yakovlev (N. Mandelshtam’s brother) explained to us in 1930 when we returned from Armenia. But now everything is new. Everyone has been divided into categories, and everyone goes hungry or eats according to his rank. A person is given the exact amount that he merits...”<sup>20</sup>

When she happened to be in a hospital, Nadezhda Mandelshtam discovered that medications were distributed according to the same table of ranks: the best medicines were reserved for the highest categories.

“Once I complained about this in the presence of a retired dignitary: everyone, I said, needs such things ... ‘What do you mean everybody!’ exclaimed the dignitary. ‘You want me to be treated like any old cleaning lady?’ The retired official was a kind man and quite decent, but whose brains wouldn’t be scrambled from the battle against egalitarianism?...”<sup>21</sup>

The fight against “egalitarianism” was bitterly fought in the countryside as well. Newspapers at the beginning of the 1930s were filled with ominous warnings: “The class enemy in the kolkhozes is trying to distribute the harvest exclusively according to mouths to feed; its slogan is — everyone wants to eat the same way, everyone wants to live the same way.” Speaking at the Twelfth Plenum of the ECCI in 1932 about the battle against the “mouths-to-feed principle” (i.e., distribution in the kolkhozes according to the number of “mouths to feed” in a family), Manuisky declared: “Violation of the principle of distribution according to work is today a kulak slogan, one that is self-seeking and that cultivates loafing.”<sup>22</sup>

Having overturned the Bolshevik traditions of equality, Stalin and his henchmen declared opponents of sharp breaks in wage scales to be “accomplices of the class enemy.”

Despite all this, among the old Bolsheviks, even those quite distant from the Left Opposition, indignation was growing over the glaring and sharp social contrasts. Thus, Boris Kozelev, who worked in 1930 at the Magnitogorsk construction site, painfully described in letters to his family how workers would crowd around the porch of the cafeteria for foreign specialists. From time to time, foreigners would come out onto the porch and toss scraps to the workers. “Then there was a scramble. They tried to drive the people away, but things only got worse, and more shameful.” With



no less indignation, Kozelev wrote that, while the average wage of the workers at the combine was seventy-nine rubles per month, “the do-nothing parasites devouring the people’s money” in the management apparatus, received pay of 400–500 rubles per month.<sup>23</sup>

In 1931, the wife of M. I. Kalinin, in the past a textile worker, confessed in a letter to her husband that she felt a feeling of shame over the privileges of that circle “to which I belonged because of your position ... But what has happened to that ideal toward which we strived, when we divide the party into communities, and almost into classes?”<sup>24</sup>

Summing up moods of this kind, Fyodor Raskolnikov, in his open letter to Stalin in 1939, sharply condemned Stalin’s social policy which had engendered a polarization of society in income and property. He wrote that “the working class, with selfless heroism, has borne the burden of stressful labor and undernourishment, famine, miserable wages, cramped housing and the lack of needed products,” at a time when Stalin was creating privileged groups one after another, showering them with favors and feeding them with handouts. Given this situation, the representatives of the privileged groups, as Raskolnikov noted, were “caliphs for an hour,” since they were guaranteed “neither their privileges, nor even their right to life.”<sup>25</sup>

The entire period of the 1930s was characterized by an unceasing redistribution of personal wealth. This process initially developed in the countryside, where the struggle against the kulaks amounted to a ruthless expropriation of all productive and consumer wealth of the families categorized as kulaks, followed by their mass deportation. Subsequently, the redistribution of personal wealth proceeded primarily in the cities, where political repression fell sharply on layers enjoying substantial material and status privileges; as a rule, repression was accompanied by the confiscation of personal and family belongings. The tragedy of families of “enemies of the people,” torn from the world of the privileged and immediately cast out among the pariahs of society, is expressively depicted in works written by Yuri Trifonov, Bulat Okudzhava and other Soviet writers who were children of victimized Old Bolsheviks.

Playing on the low and baser sides of human nature, Stalin understood that a Bolshevik who had renounced the idea of social equality and had become receptive to the privileges raining down on him would be ready to carry out the most savage and cruel commands. The more closely the Great Terror of 1937–1938 approached, the more generously he showered his satraps with ever more luxurious benefits. Kamil Ikramov, the son of the first secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, Akmal Ikramov, recalled the “compulsory resettlement” of his family into “a house which Stalin himself, without having seen it, had selected for Ikramov.”

“Heavy, copper-plated doors, three steps leading up from the entryway, and above double-doors, caryatids. A dining room with two Corinthian columns, and in the study, bentwood furniture covered with blue silk and porcelain medallions.

“Father was extremely sharp in speaking with the house-managers, who were concealing their smirks. It was then that I first heard the words ‘caryatids’ and ‘grisette.’

“After all, I’m no grisette, to deserve such furniture. And then, these caryatids ... Simple Uzbeks will be frightened. What should I do, invite people up through the back door?”

“They changed the furniture, but the caryatids remained.”<sup>26</sup>

The Ikramov family lived in the house with caryatids exactly one year, right up until the arrest of the head of the family. Kamil Ikramov was justified in calling the resettlement into this house a “sign of the times.” “Having wiped clean the very memory of the partmaximum, Stalin was buying, bribing, and corrupting his associates, communist-leaders in the center and in the outlying areas. The more blood he shed, the more important it was for him to create around himself a caste who lived, not as the people lived, but in such a way that people were yearning to enter this caste, with all its benefits.”<sup>27</sup>

A no less offensive way of life than that among the party apparatchiks developed among leaders of the OGPU. Aleksandr Avdeenko, who joined the writers’ brigade, created for writing an apologetic book about “reforging” prisoners during construction of the Belomor Canal, recounts his impressions from the visit to this construction site:

“They brought up to the platform a special train of luxury wagons, glittering with lacquer, paint and mirrored windows ... From the moment we became guests of the Cheka, full communism began for us. We ate and drank according to our needs, without paying for anything. Smoked sausages. Cheese. Caviar. Fruit. Chocolate. Wine. Cognac. And all this in a year of famine!

“As I eat and drink, I sadly remember the Magnitogorsk-Moscow train. One after another, the platforms, stations, sub-stations and sidings flashed by. And everywhere along the railway bed stood ragged, bare-footed, emaciated children and old people. Skin and bones, walking skeletons. And they all reached out their hands to the wagons passing by. And on the lips of all of them was the one, easily distinguishable word: bread, bread, bread.”<sup>28</sup>

By the way, these burdensome recollections did not prevent Avdeenko, like other writers, from gladly devouring the delicacies they were offered.

The writers also received generous morsels from the grand dining table upon their arrival in Leningrad.

“The Chekists prepared in the banquet hall of the ‘Astoria’ inconceivably luxurious fare. ... I was stunned by the unprecedented abundance. ... With whatever was on the table, one could feed our entire horde, and lords in black jackets with snow-white shirt-fronts poured us soup-plates of borscht, bouillon, noodle soup, whatever anyone wanted. And this was called the ‘first course,’ although before this there were no fewer than twenty dishes.”<sup>29</sup>

Even a half century later, Avdeenko needed a whole page to describe all the dishes fed to the writers at the Cheka banquet, representing a peculiar feast at a time of pestilence.

Not only the party and Cheka higher-ups, but the leading officials of the soviet, economic, and trade-union apparatus were seized by the process of everyday degeneration. They were all provided



*Akmal Ikramovich Ikramov*  
(1898–1938)

with high pay, personal automobiles, the best vacation facilities, state country-homes, magnificent apartments, first-class medical care, and overt or secret provisions. Material corruption in the hands of Stalin served as a means of holding the bureaucracy in obedience, no less effective than fear of cruel repression for the slightest sign of opposition. As was emphasized in the “Riutin Platform,” the overwhelming majority of people belonging to the bureaucratic upper echelons were internally “opposed to present policy for they could not help but see that it was doomed.”

“But they had grown so flabby, they were so tied to all the privileges they had been granted (and any protest against the present course and its inspirer resulted in enormous deprivations) that a significant portion of them in the future would bear any yoke, any kicks or any humiliations coming from Stalin and the party apparatus.”<sup>30</sup>

By the same unwritten laws, apparatchiks who were proven guilty of opposition sentiments (let alone actions), immediately felt the loss of their privileges. For this, according to Aleksandr Orlov, Stalin employed “a multitude of well-tested methods.”

“The first and most inoffensive applied to dignitaries who had fallen into disfavor, was called ‘putting him on his feet,’ that is, depriving the disgraced official of his personal automobile and personal chauffeur. The next punishment was called ‘a punch in the stomach’: the evil-doer was stripped of his right to use the Kremlin cafeteria and receive food from closed stores. If we are talking about a member of the government, he would also be evicted from a government house and deprived of his personal bodyguards.”<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, official propaganda spread the myth that has lasted to this day, that the “leaders” continued to live a modest, if not ascetic, way of life. In confirmation of this myth, references were made to the relatively small wages paid to the “leaders,” while maintaining complete silence about their material privileges.

Khrushchev tried to revive this myth in his memoirs, where he idealized the epoch of the 1930s, contrasting it to the days of his retirement, when, in his own words, “the mass of functionaries, toadies and careerists” had multiplied. “What has happened is that membership in the party today, a party card, is a hope for better accommodating oneself in our socialist society.” Khrushchev asserted that the party leaders in the 1930s had “to sacrifice much, without receiving benefits,” that they lived “more than modestly...”

“The times of which I speak were the times of romantics. Now, unfortunately, a petty-bourgeois spirit has crept into the party milieu. At that time, no one would have allowed the thought, for instance, of having a personal dacha [country home] — after all, we were communists! I don’t know who among us had two pairs of shoes. A soldier’s blouse, trousers, belt, cap, a high-collared shirt — that’s all the clothes we had.”<sup>32</sup>

In fact, the “militarized” style of clothing, following Stalin’s example, was then the uniform of party leaders (although the shirts, boots and other essential attributes of this style were made for them in special tailor shops from imported material and by the best master-tailors). Hunting for rich interiors was not practiced in those years. The apartments of the party elite were supplied with uniformly standardized furniture and utensils, which were stamped (even the bedsheets and towels) or labeled with tags showing that these objects of everyday life were official property. Such relics of the epoch of war communism silently reminded the bureaucrat that he was firmly tied to the party-state

machine, and that all movable or immovable property which he enjoyed, was granted to him only as long as he occupied a post in the nomenclatura, which opened the way to elite homes.

However, this did not complicate the everyday life of the bureaucracy, which was fully provided for by the state. Such existence was made easier; its dimensions were not strictly regulated, but depended on the zeal which this or that leading bureaucrat applied to obtaining supplies, and what relations he had established in his hierarchy. Nina P. Khrushcheva recounted in her memoirs how, as she was preparing to move to Ukraine, where her husband had been appointed first secretary of the CC, she turned to the wife of his predecessor at that post, Kosior, for advice as to what kitchen dishes she should take with her. Kosior's wife was very surprised by this question and said that she didn't need to take anything, since the home that would be provided to Khrushchev already had everything.

“And sure enough, there turned out to be a cook on the staff, and she had so many dishes, the likes of which I had never seen. The same went for the dining room ... There we began to live on state provisions: furniture, dishes, beds — official things brought from a warehouse; we had to settle our accounts once a month.”<sup>33</sup>

Thus, families of the bureaucrats, freed from the slightest concerns about organizing their everyday existence, lived by completely different laws than tens of millions of Soviet people who suffered from innumerable shortages, deficiencies and lines.

In characterizing the social consequences of the policy of spreading privileges, Trotsky stressed:

“The bureaucracy has at its disposal enormous income, not so much in monetary form as in the form of goods in kind: beautiful buildings, automobiles, dachas, the best consumer items from all corners of the nation. The upper layer of the bureaucracy lives like the big bourgeoisie in capitalist countries; the provincial bureaucrat and lower strata of the capital live like the petty-bourgeoisie. The bureaucracy creates a base around itself in the form of a workers' aristocracy; the so-called heroes of labor, the bearers of medals, and so forth ... enjoy privileges for their loyalty to the bureaucracy, whether central or local. They all have earned the well-deserved hatred of the people.”<sup>34</sup>

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1. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1931, № 19, p. 37.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1931, № 23, p. 22.

4. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 23.

5. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13, pp. 67–68 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, p. 70].

6. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 24.

7. *Polis*, 1991, № 2, p. 182.

8. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1933, № 36–37, p. 10.

9. *Polis*, 1991, № 2, p. 177.

10. L. D. Trotskii, *Predannaia revoliutsiia*, p. 98 [Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, Labor Publications, 1991, p. 100].

11. *Ibid.*, p. 104 [*Ibid.*, pp. 105–106].

12. *Polis*, 1991, № 2, p. 183.

13. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1931, № 19, p. 20.

14. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1932, № 29–30, p. 11.

15. *Ibid.*



- [16.](#) *Pervyi vsesoiuznyi s"ezd sovetskikh pisatelej. Stenograficheskii otchet*, M., 1934, p. 549.
- [17.](#) *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, 1987, № 4, p. 9.
- [18.](#) *Iunost'*, 1967, № 3, pp. 29–30.
- [19.](#) *Iunost'*, 1988, № 8, p. 60.
- [20.](#) Ibid.
- [21.](#) Ibid.
- [22.](#) *XII plenum IKKI. Stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. 3, M., 1933, p. 138.
- [23.](#) *Molodoi kommunist*, 1990, № 11 , pp. 52, 55–56.
- [24.](#) *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1989, № 10, p. 108.
- [25.](#) *Nedelia*, 1988, № 26.
- [26.](#) *Znamia*, 1989, № 5, pp. 38–39.
- [27.](#) Ibid., p. 38.
- [28.](#) A. Avdeenko, *Nakazanie bez prestupleniia* [Punishment without a Crime], M., 1991, pp. 12–13.
- [29.](#) Ibid.
- [30.](#) *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 425.
- [31.](#) *Ogonėk*, 1989, № 51, p. 22.
- [32.](#) *Znamia*, 1989, № 9, pp. 15, 20.
- [33.](#) *Znamia*, 1988, № 6, p. 96.
- [34.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin*, vol. II, p. 213.

# 30. The Alternative of the Left Opposition in 1932

In 1932, the consequences of Stalin's social and economic policy could be seen in growing economic disproportions and decreasing tempos of economic growth. The increase in industrial production proved to be lower by more than one-half of the indicators in the annual plan. The growth in the productivity of labor almost came to a halt; instead of a projected decrease, the costs of production became greater; the scale of unfinished construction grew. In agriculture, a decrease in the harvest occurred, and the livestock population was half what it had been in 1928. The reduction of retail trade led to an enormous budget deficit, which was covered by a growing emission of paper currency.

In citing these facts, hidden or garbled by official statistics, the authors of the *Bulletin* stressed that the economic crisis had reached its peak; deficiency in food supply was "holding the entire economy by the throat." Meanwhile, the plenums of the Central Committee, as usual, were confirming the absolute correctness of the leadership's line and saw the cause of the failure of the economic plans in the poor execution of directives.

"At fault are the executors, the local officials, but not the leadership or the incorrect line. About the need to change the regime, under which even a healthy idea or correct directive takes on monstrously distorted forms when being carried out; under which party thought has been stifled once and for all — not a word."<sup>1</sup>

The article, "At a New Turning Point. Crisis of the Soviet Economy," sent by a group of oppositionists in Moscow and Leningrad, emphasized that, instead of "empirical adjustments, separate stop-gap measures and palliatives" administered by Stalin's leadership, what was needed was a radical change in policy: the restoration of normal commodity exchange between city and countryside; an open rejection of the administrative liquidation of the kulaks and of the forced preservation of unviable kolkhozes.

The article developed ideas advanced by Trotsky, while still in the period of drafting the first Five-Year Plan, about overcoming the economic isolation of the USSR and strengthening its ties with the world market, which represented "practically inexhaustible reserves for the economy of every country, not only capitalist, but also socialist." The economic life of the Soviet Union was unthinkable without the growth of its ties with the world economy. Therefore, in Trotsky's opinion, the Five-Year Plan should be seen only as the first stage, from which it would be necessary to move as quickly as possible "to an eight- to ten-year prospective plan, in order to encompass the average period of renovating equipment and, by doing so, in particular, to adapt to the world conjuncture. Any kind of prolonged stabilization of post-war capitalism ... would inevitably lead to the re-emergence of commodity-industrial cycles, interrupted by the war, and we must construct our own plans not on an imaginary independence from the world conjuncture, but on a rational adaptation to it, i.e., in such a way as to win as much as possible from its rise and lose as little as possible from a crisis."<sup>2</sup>

In developing these ideas, the authors of the article, “At a New Turning Point,” suggested taking advantage of the difficulties experienced by foreign countries during the world capitalist crisis, to overcome the most acute disproportions of the Soviet economy. They felt that it was necessary to build economic relations between the USSR and capitalist countries, not only in the form of credits and orders, but also in the form of a long-term plan for collaborating with major capitalist countries, which might be accepted by the ruling circles of the latter for the sake of softening the economic crisis.

“No matter how incomplete our Soviet experience is, for the first time it allows us to show, with facts and figures in hand, the grandiose, and, furthermore, nearby and immediate possibilities which open up before a planned economy if it is extended to the advanced capitalist countries.”<sup>3</sup>

The article pointed out that the reliability of statistical data in the Soviet Union had been greatly degraded. The liquidation of false statistics, which served as a component part of the system of bureaucratic lies, would allow “the use of genuine, and not falsified, results of the experience of the first Five-Year Plan as the basis for a second Five-Year Plan.”<sup>4</sup> A sober and realistic analysis of the country’s financial situation should be aimed at decisively restraining inflation and introducing a budget within the borders of real economic possibilities. Only in this way would it be possible to stabilize the monetary unit and restore its role as an instrument of economic calculation.

In the article, “The Soviet Economy in Danger,” Trotsky developed a more comprehensive alternative program of the Left Opposition. He stated that the economic maladies that were supposed to be cured by Stalin’s “six [saving] conditions,” had deepened and become more malignant. The reports in Soviet newspapers, about the continuing growth of labor turnover and of the unbearable living conditions of the workers, reflected the enormous tension that the discontent of the working class had reached. The intolerable burden loaded on the worker’s shoulders by malnutrition and the race for production, could, “in an extremely short time, wreck not only equipment but wear down the producers themselves.”<sup>5</sup>

An even worse situation had developed in the countryside, where “the race for records in collectivization, without regard for the technical, economic and cultural possibilities of agriculture, have led in fact to fatal consequences. It has killed the incentives for the petty producer long before it could replace them with other, much higher economic stimuli. Administrative pressure, which exhausts itself quickly in industry, turns out to be completely powerless in agriculture.”<sup>6</sup>

Collectivization could be viable only to the extent that it preserved the personal interest of the collective farmers in their labor, building their relations within the kolkhoz, just as it built the relations of the kolkhoz to the outside world, on the foundations of economic calculation. “This means that correct, economically sound collectivization at the present stage should have led not to the elimination of the NEP, but only to the gradual transformation of its methods.”<sup>7</sup>

However, the bureaucracy liquidated NEP and replaced market relations, without which economic calculation is inconceivable, with the expansion of methods of compulsion. After the administrative strangulation of NEP, i.e., of the system of market regulation of the economy, it freed planning from

control by the market. Meanwhile, the innumerable living participants in the economic process “should declare their needs and their relative strength not only through the statistical computations of the planning commission, but through the immediate pressure of supply and demand. The plan is checked and, to a significant degree, carried out through the market.”<sup>8</sup> Only the interaction of three elements: state planning, the market and soviet democracy could guarantee the correct guidance of the economy in the transitional epoch.

Trotsky evaluated the restoration of the bazaars as recognition of the untimely liquidation of the NEP, but a recognition that was empirical, partial, not thought out, and contradictory. Bazaar trade had become a way of speculating on the needs of the city, reducing to nothing the economic stimulus at state enterprises. “What significance do a few extra rubles per month have for a worker if he is forced to go to the bazaar to buy vital products in short supply for ten times the price?”<sup>9</sup>

Trotsky concluded his analysis of the crisis-ridden Soviet economy by declaring that trying to force the economy along by further use of the administrative whip was inadmissible. “The crisis can be mitigated, and then even overcome, not by issuing commands, but by economic regulation. After the adventuristic offensive, what is needed is a planned retreat that is thought out as fully as possible.”<sup>10</sup> Such a retreat must most of all be carried out in the realm of collectivization. “To forcefully keep peasants in the collectives when they are plundering the harvest, selling off their seed supplies and then demanding them from the state — is the purest insanity.”<sup>11</sup> It would be necessary to preserve only the most viable kolkhozes, after restructuring them in accord with the experience and desire of the main peasant masses.

In the realm of industry, it was necessary to begin improving the situation of the workers. “Guarantee the workers and their families food, housing and clothing. At whatever cost!” This would require, above all else, “halting with an iron hand the process of inflation and restoring a stable monetary unit. This difficult and painful operation cannot be accomplished without a bold reduction of capital investments — that is, without sacrificing the many hundreds of millions that had senselessly or inopportunistically been invested in new construction — in order to prevent billions of losses in the future.”<sup>12</sup>, <sup>13</sup>

Trotsky felt that the thoroughly disorderly state of the economy excluded the possibility of planned work over prolonged periods. Therefore, he proposed that in the next year, 1933, work be based on a one-year plan devoted to solving social problems. The highest criterion of this plan should be “not to produce as much as possible as fast as possible, but to bring order into the economy: ... to build badly-needed apartments and cafeterias, to finish building roofs, to lay more sewage pipes. For, in order to work well, people must first of all live in human conditions, and, consequently, satisfy their human needs.”<sup>14</sup>

In order to overcome the bureaucratic approach to the economy, Trotsky stressed once more, a radical reconstruction of the entire political system was needed, and most of all, of the party regime.

“The task of tasks is to resurrect the party. Here also we need an inventory of the burdensome inheritance of the post-Lenin period; we need to separate the healthy from the sick, the good from the bad; we need to clear out the rubbish and mud; we



need to air out and disinfect all the offices of the bureaucracy.”<sup>15</sup>

The idea about the need, through free criticism from bottom to top, to restructure the political system and “ruthlessly cleanse it of the garbage that had piled up” was contained in Trotsky’s letters to the party and soviet leadership that he sent at the beginning of 1932. Trotsky addressed an open letter to the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee in connection with its decree on 20 February 1932, stripping him and members of his family of Soviet citizenship for “counter-revolutionary activity.”<sup>16</sup> In this letter, summarizing the monstrous mistakes of Stalin’s leadership over the previous years, Trotsky wrote:

“Stalin has led you into a blind alley. You cannot get back on track in any other way than by liquidating Stalinism. ... You must, finally, carry out Lenin’s last and insistent advice — *remove Stalin*.”<sup>17</sup>

Even earlier, on 4 January, Trotsky had sent a secret letter to the Politburo and Presidium of the Central Control Commission of the VKP(b), in which he stressed that the process of replacing the leadership of the party, and even of the Central Committee, with Stalin’s absolute power had been completed. Soviet newspapers spoke exclusively about “Stalin’s leadership,” “Stalin’s orders,” and “Stalin’s general line,” while completely ignoring the CC. The party “has been led to such a state of humiliation, that the ignorance, organic opportunism and disloyalty of one person are making their imprint on great historical events.”<sup>18</sup>



*Trotsky in his study in Prinkipo, 1931.*

Responding in this letter to the new ideological campaign opened at the end of 1931 against “counter-revolutionary Trotskyism,” Trotsky saw its true cause: Stalin had come to the conclusion that it had been a mistake to send him into exile abroad. In making the decision about exile, Stalin “hoped

— as we know from the transcript of his statement to the Politburo at that time — that, without a ‘secretariat,’ without resources, Trotsky would become merely a helpless victim of the bureaucratic slander campaign being organized on an international scale. The man of the apparatus miscalculated. Despite what he foresaw, it turned out that ideas have their own power, without an apparatus and without resources.”<sup>19</sup>

Trotsky declared that “Stalin’s plans and designs can in no way or extent influence the policy of the Left Opposition, or of me, in particular. The political fate of Stalin — corrupter of the party, grave-digger of the Chinese Revolution, destroyer of the Comintern, and candidate for grave-digger of the German Revolution — is foreordained. His political bankruptcy will be one of the most terrible in history. The issue now at hand is not about Stalin, but about saving the Comintern, the proletarian dictatorship, the heritage of the October Revolution, and of resurrecting the party of Lenin.”<sup>20</sup>

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1. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 22.

2. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1930, № 17–18, p. 9 [Cf.: “Successes of Socialism and Dangers of Adventurism,” in: *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, pp. 103–104].

3. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1932, № 29–30, p. 3.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

5. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 6 [Cf.: “The Soviet Economy in Danger,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)*, p. 268].

6. *Ibid.* [*Ibid.*, p. 270].

7. *Ibid.*, p. 9 [*Ibid.*, p. 275].

8. *Ibid.*, p. 8 [*Ibid.*, p. 274].

9. *Ibid.*, p. 9 [*Ibid.*, p. 276].

10. *Ibid.*, p. 10 [*Ibid.*, p. 279].

11. *Ibid.*, p. 12 [*Ibid.*, p. 283].

12. After long hesitation, these proposals, that had insistently been made by Trotsky during the entire Five-Year Plan, were partially realized by the Stalinists. In the summer of 1932, the Politburo decided to reduce the financing of capital construction by 700 million rubles. In a letter to Ordzhonikidze, who had protested against this measure, Kaganovich noted that “our main friend” [Stalin] “felt that it was absolutely correct and timely” to reduce capital expenditures (*Svobodnaia mysl'*, 1991, № 17, p. 80).

13. *Ibid.*, p. 12 [*Ibid.*, p. 282].

14. *Ibid.*, p. 13 [*Ibid.*, p. 284].

15. *Ibid.* [*Ibid.*].

16. By decrees of the VTsIK on 10 August and 16 October 1922, the OGPU was granted the right to deport people who had engaged in anti-Soviet activity for a period of no more than three years, while preserving their Soviet citizenship. The right to deprive citizenship after the sentence had expired was formally held only by the highest organ of the state.

17. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1932, № 27, p. 6 [Cf.: “An Open Letter to the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)*, p. 71].

18. L. D. Trotskii, *Dnevnik i pis'ma* [Diaries and Letters], Ermitazh (USA), 1986, p. 41 [Cf.: “A Letter to the Politburo,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)*, p. 18].

19. *Ibid.*, p. 42 [*Ibid.*, p. 19].



*Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili [Stalin]  
(1878–1953)*



# 31. Stalin, the Party, and the Opposition

What was Trotsky hoping for when he turned to the party and soviet leadership with a demand to “remove Stalin”? We will find an adequate answer to this question only if we keep in mind that, by the end of the first Five-Year Plan, the spontaneously developing protest that was taking shape against Stalin’s policy had embraced significant layers of the party, who had not previously belonged to any of the oppositions. This protest ever more frequently found reflection in appeals of rank-and-file communists to leaders of the party. Thus, at the end of 1932, Kirov received a letter from Maksimov expressing the hope that in determining party policy, attention would be given to what he described as “the moods and views of lower-level activists and rank-and-file party members.” He noted that promises made by the party leadership that in the next years “we would have paradise on earth” had ended up as extreme impoverishment of the toilers in both town and country. The letter’s author saw the causes of this “in the absence of *Lenin’s* directives in politics ... If the party had followed these instructions and not ‘forced its way through’ (as comrade Stalin wants to do), if the verification of theory had been seen in practice, and if mistakes that had been made had been openly acknowledged, then the type of situation that we now see would not have been created.”<sup>1</sup>

These issues were raised even more sharply in a letter sent in 1933 to Stalin by the communist N. Khruliov. Clearly recognizing the consequences that might befall him because of this letter, which “was the result of long periods of reflection and many sleepless nights,” the author noted that the refusal to write it “would signify for me the loss of communist conscience, and I would no longer respect myself.”

Khruliov wrote with indignation that Stalin had turned his cult “into the unquestionable dogma of our party, into an unwritten program and statutes, the slightest doubt in which leads to ostracism. ... This continuous lying in the newspapers, doesn’t it make you sick? Or are you so convinced that ... without your cult we could not exist, we could not build anything?”

Accusing Stalin of the fact that his policy had demanded millions of victims, Khruliov warned that “history will figure things out better and will issue its sentence: no matter how great your self-confidence and no matter how unlimited your real power, it is not in your power to dictate to the future its evaluation of our days and of your role! ... Your theory that a retreat of one iota from your line would lead to restoration, will be firmly cast aside. .... Referring to the class struggle and the kulak will not save you.”<sup>2</sup>

Khruliov paid dearly for this letter. He was sentenced to three years in prison, and in 1938 he was punished again for “counter-revolutionary agitation.”

Evidence that letters of this kind were far from isolated occurrences is contained in an informational communiqué about political moods in the country, prepared in the fall of 1932 for a narrow circle of party leaders. This report included 408 letters that came to the Central Executive Committee of the USSR. Typical of a number of these letters was one that said:



“You do not know the actual mood of the masses. You have chosen a course not toward the working-class masses, but toward the technical personnel and leading bureaucratic mass, which unquestioningly carries out all that is ordered from above. ... This is not an accidental phenomenon, but the policy of the leader Stalin, who has driven out the best forces from the leading apparatuses, firm Bolshevik-Leninists, who could firmly defend their own views and listen to the needs of the working class.”<sup>3</sup>

A flood of indignant letters also went to the Central Control Commission, which many communists still saw as a body capable of protecting the party from Stalin’s despotism. In letters coming to the CCC at the end of 1932, the following statements appear: “We have to say, long live Stalin, even though millions are starving, and dying from hunger, naked and barefooted; for five years they’ve been robbing the peasants, and from year to year, from month to month, people grow hungrier” (the letter is signed: “Leninist. Ustinov,” with the number of his party card). “Long live Lenin’s party, not Stalin’s!” “The working class will not forgive your scorn for leaders of the working class” (on this letter is a note from Yaroslavsky: “Postmark on the envelope. Establish the author. Sent from the city of Belev”).<sup>4</sup>

All of these letters appealing to the party-soviet higher-ups serve as clear evidence that the party in those years was not as “monolithic” as claimed by Stalinist and post-Stalinist Soviet historiography, and asserted, although with an opposite goal, by contemporary anti-communists, who place responsibility for the crimes of Stalin’s clique on the whole party. In reality, Bolshevik ideas continued to live in the consciousness of many communists who viewed Stalin’s policy as a cruel desecration of these ideas.

The expressions of social and political protest were not exhausted by individual attempts to appeal to the reason and conscience of the leaders. In 1932, in a number of cities there were workers’ actions in connection with reductions in the norm of ration-card provisions and in the irregular distribution of products through such ration cards. Particularly enthusiastic strikes and demonstrations occurred in the Ivanovo *oblast*, where secretaries of the CC, Kaganovich and Postyshev, were sent to “establish order.”

Letters from the USSR published in the *Bulletin of the Opposition* reported on the expulsion from the party of many hundreds of workers for actions against the policy of Stalin’s clique. Despite these moves, “oppositional vacillation” penetrated not only into the lower ranks of the party, but even among the apparatchiks, who continuously felt both the pressure from above, in the form of countless directives demanding the unswerving and unquestioning fulfillment of ruthless decisions and unreal plans, as well as pressure from below, on the part of workers who were angry over these plans and decisions.

Ferment beneath the surface of the apparatus increased as a result of the fact that Stalin periodically sacrificed a significant portion of party functionaries to the general dissatisfaction of his policy. He presented them in the eyes of the population as culprits in the “incorrect” execution of “correct” directives. These repressive measures served as a means of frightening loyal apparatchiks, of guaranteeing their unconditional obedience and, at the same time, as a means of “cajoling” the people, of creating the impression that the “center” unswervingly punished “evil” at the local level. All punitive expeditions in the city and countryside were accompanied by reprisals against the

representatives of the lower and even the middle links in the party and soviet apparatus. Nevertheless, the lower-level apparatus was ever more frequently abandoning their obedience to the apparatus higher-ups and passing over into actual opposition to them.

The contradictions between the upper and lower layers of the apparatus were also caused by the following: the lower-level party, soviet and economic officials, who were closer to the masses and who maintained ties to them, reflected to a certain degree the moods of the rank-and-file workers. As was noted in *The Militant Bolshevik*, the handwritten organ of the prisoners in the Verkhneural'sk political isolator, passive resistance to Stalin's policy was expressed in the fact that the lower-level apparatus in industry, "in conditions of today's terror has dared to begin talking about 'the disgraceful attitude toward the everyday needs of the workers,' has dared to have doubts about Stalin's methodology in calculating real wage levels, has dared to declare that the feelings of the main layers of the working class are much more accurate in this issue than many indices."<sup>5</sup>

In the 1920s, in an atmosphere of relative well-being in the country, the majority of communists voted for the "line of the CC," while poorly understanding the essence of the inner-party disagreements. At the beginning of the 1930s, however, despite the absence of a legal opposition movement, anti-Stalin moods seized even a significant part of the bureaucracy, who considered Stalin guilty of the mistakes and crimes that had accumulated. Reporting that "general discontent has even spread to the apparatus," a correspondent of the *Bulletin* wrote:

"It seems that not a trace remains of the illusions connected with the personality of the general secretary and his policy. The narrow upper echelon answers to nobody; its reign of terror over the party and soviet apparatus, its harassing of subordinates and cries that 'those carrying out orders are good for nothing,' — only strengthen the dissatisfaction of the apparatus itself. It pays with its own hide for yesterday's directives from the Center."<sup>6</sup>

"The bureaucracy senses," reports another letter, "that the lower ranks are very upset with them, and are shifting their growing concerns onto Stalin. ... No one believes in Stalin's 'genius.'"<sup>7</sup>

Despite the unceasing flood of praise published in the press, Stalin's position at the end of the first Five-Year Plan was more unstable than ever. Stalin's clique was more and more alienating itself, not only from the party masses, but also from the rank-and-file apparatchiks. Letters from the USSR reported that "the party is lacking any kind of information about what the CC thinks, how it evaluates the situation,"<sup>8</sup> and that the "closed-in nature of the party elite is now so great that information about its inner life hardly ever makes its way down below. In addition, the internal battles play out, not in official institutions like the Politburo, CC, etc., but within the four walls of the general secretariat, in a tight and very intimate circle."<sup>9</sup>

Only in recent times have several documents been published that give a certain idea of the character and sharpness of these "internal battles." From the letters of 1930–1933 sent by Stalin to Molotov, who apparently remained at that time his only consistent comrade-in-arms, it is clear that Stalin did not find support in many questions, even among the most influential members of the Politburo. Stalin warned that "we cannot leave the PB and SNK for long to Kuibyshev (he might start drinking) and Kaganovich." Stalin became particularly exasperated by Ordzhonikidze's attacks on

Vyshinsky, who had demanded the most severe punishments for the output of substandard production. Stalin called this “escapade with Sergo over Vyshinsky” hooliganism and anti-party behavior, directed at “discrediting the practical line of the CC,” and “having as its objective goal the defense of reactionary elements in the party against the CC VKP(b).” Insofar as Ordzhonikidze’s position found support from Kaganovich, Stalin accused the latter of “turning up, against my expectations, in the camp of reactionary elements in the party.”<sup>10</sup>

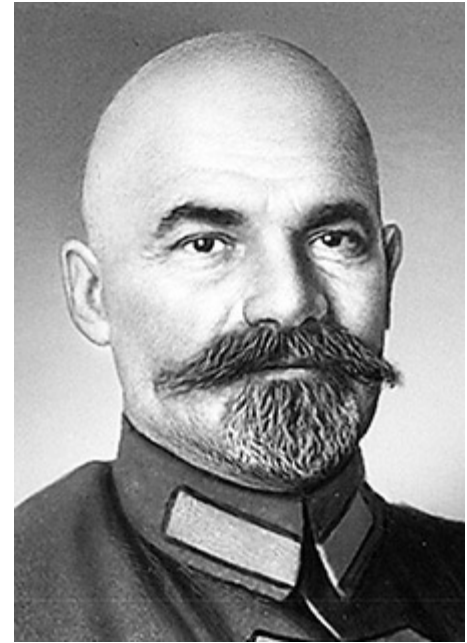
That Stalin sensed the precariousness of his situation and avoided open speeches that could undermine his authority in the party even more, can be seen in his silence throughout the whole year of 1932. During this year he did not give a single public speech; he published only two short articles, two letters and a few greetings. As the correspondent of the *Bulletin* reported, “at the Seventeenth Conference, Stalin did not say a word. His silence made an enormous impression, and a terrible one at that. ... Toward the end of the conference the delegates themselves became worried and began to respectfully insist that the ‘leader’ speak. But Stalin bluntly refused. This genuinely shook many people. Some began to say aloud, in their own circle, of course: ‘Why isn’t he speaking? Because he has nothing to say.’”<sup>11</sup> Besides the conference, in 1932 there were two plenums of the CC, at which Stalin also “did not speak, although he was present; he limited himself to shouts from the floor.”<sup>12</sup> “Stalin’s silence and his seclusion are taking on an ever more demonstrative character,”<sup>13</sup> noted another author of the *Bulletin*.

Despite Stalin’s seeming triumph, his power was still not so unlimited that he could sever all of Trotsky’s contacts with his co-thinkers in the USSR and destroy the underground life of the Left Opposition. “Despite unrelenting organizational debacles, the Left Opposition lives,” wrote one of the authors of the *Bulletin*. Although “there is hardly any place and any time in the world for a genuine Marxist tendency where it has been so difficult in a technical sense to conduct work as it is for us now in the Soviet Union,” nevertheless, “the authority of those oppositionists who have not bowed down and have not been broken is terribly high among the party masses, including among the apparatchiks. ‘Now those are real people!’ — say even our opponents. Others express themselves a bit more precisely: ‘They are true Bolsheviks!’”<sup>14</sup>

According to figures in the *Bulletin*, at the beginning of the 1930s, there were more than 7,000 adherents of the Left Opposition in prisons, exile and under surveillance. A significant portion of them were held in so-called political isolators, along with members of former socialist parties: Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, anarchists, and so forth. At that time, the regime in the political isolators was relatively soft. There, as the Old Bolshevik Zinaida Nemtsova recounted, there were “comfortable cells. In them, people could work. Or not work, of their own choosing. And geographically, the political isolators were located in good places. You could go outside for a walk. But people were considered to be under arrest, that is, they were prisoners. Although they even had access to a library. The proposal was made to them: study. Check what you know. With original sources. Return to Marx, to Lenin. Work on yourselves a bit. And make a final decision about your convictions.”<sup>15</sup>

Carefully measuring out his plan of exterminating the Left Opposition, Stalin set out at the beginning of the 1930s to compel the “voluntary” capitulation of the last Opposition leaders who had remained loyal to their convictions.

In pursuing these aims, the authorities gave extended terms of imprisonment or exile to the victimized Oppositionists who refused to submit a statement of capitulation; they were sent to even worse regions. Along with this, several of them were given certain indulgences, for instance, they were allowed to appear in Moscow. “Recently Nikolai I. Muralov traveled to Moscow on family matters, with special permission of the authorities,” reported a correspondent of the *Bulletin*. “It is possible that the very trip was granted to him in order to test his resolve. Some of the more respectable capitulators were set loose on Nikolai Ivanovich. They asked to meet with him. He replied: ‘If you intend to try to convince me, then there is no reason to meet.’ This sentence immediately made its way around Moscow, and it met with nothing but approval: ‘Good man, Muralych!’”<sup>16</sup>



*Nikolai Ivanovich Muralov*  
(1877–1937)

The steadfastness of the Oppositionists who had not yielded and the influence of the Left Opposition in broad party circles, was aided by the distribution in the Soviet Union of the *Bulletin of the Opposition*, which was published until March 1931 in Paris, and then right up until Hitler came to power in 1933, in Berlin. Many party members, including officials at the embassies, returning from assignments abroad, illegally brought issues of the *Bulletin* to their native land and showed them to their friends. Many Oppositionists, both those at liberty and those in exile or in prisons, maintained regular contact with Trotsky, sending him letters and even hand-written newspapers that were published in several political isolators. As years went by, discovery of the *Bulletin* during searches began to threaten ever more severe punishment. As a result, the sphere of its distribution decreased. Nevertheless, many communists continued to eagerly catch some news from the *Bulletin*. “Those who didn’t dare to bring a fresh issue of the *Bulletin* in their pocket,” wrote an anonymous correspondent in 1932, “read it abroad from cover to cover, and nothing, of course, can prevent them from bringing the *Bulletin* in their heads. From them the ideas of the *Bulletin* spread in wider circles. In addition, the official press, in all major questions, feels that it is necessary to provide a slogan against ‘counter-revolutionary Trotskyism’ ... (in it) one can always come across a citation from the *Bulletin* or a paraphrase of some article or another. From this standpoint, Oppositionists open a fresh number of the newspaper or slit open a journal’s fresh pages: is there anything there about us? The quotations, it is true, are almost always mangled, the ideas are broken up, but over these years we have learned a



lot, including how to read between the lines. In nine times out of ten, we unerringly guess how it is that you are actually raising a question in the *Bulletin*.”<sup>17</sup>

In describing the mixed sphere of political moods in the party, it is possible to distinguish several types of attitudes toward Trotsky and “Trotskyists.” Hostility towards them was caused, first of all, by refusal to accept their criticism of the bureaucracy’s absolute power; secondly, by a fundamental disagreement with their ideological principles (orientation to world revolution, defense of social equality, admissibility of factions and oppositions in the party); thirdly, by “indignation” over criticism, open to “the whole world,” by Trotsky and other authors of the *Bulletin of the Opposition* of “internal matters” in the party and the country, even if much of this criticism was seen to be justified.

Along with this, among the unorganized and undivided masses of oppositionally inclined communists, sympathy for Trotsky and his supporters also arose for various reasons: some consciously recognized the correctness of the ideological and political program of the Left Opposition; others, who had not looked deeply into the theoretical debates, accepted Trotsky politically, not ideologically, since he remained the only unbroken, “working” leader of the Opposition; still others were impressed by his criticism of Stalin and Stalinism that had been made from consistently Bolshevik positions.

An ever growing number of communists who were critical of the ruling regime understood that resistance to the latter could find a formal and organized outlet only by establishing contact with the “Trotskyists” who had maintained their illegal faction. For this reason, the GPU directed ever greater effort toward catching the oppositionists who remained at liberty. This was achieved both by infiltrating out-and-out provocateurs into the opposition underground, as well as by putting demagogic pressure on party members who knew something about the activity of this underground. The methods of extorting information about the past or present activity of “Trotskyists” is vividly portrayed in Solzhenitsyn’s novel, *The First Circle*. Here is the account of how Lev Rubin, who worked as editor of the newspaper of the Kharkov tractor factory, was suddenly summoned in 1931 to see the secretary of the factory’s party committee, a typical Stalinist of those years.

“In the office was a third person, a non-worker type, in a tie, suit, and yellow shoes. He sat off to the side, looking at papers and paying no attention to the person who had just walked in...

“In a constrained and somewhat lackluster manner, the woman started talking with Lyova about factory matters that they had always eagerly discussed before. And suddenly, leaning back, she said firmly: ‘Comrade Rubin! You must lay down your arms before the party!’...

“Now that special type politely intervened ... He said that Rubin must honestly and completely tell everything that he knew about his married cousin: is it true that he had previously been an active member of an underground Trotskyist organization, and now was hiding this from the party?...

“‘I don’t know. He was never a Trotskyist,’ replied Lyovka’s tongue, but his reason told him that, speaking as an adult, without childish romanticism, refusal to confess was no longer needed.

“The secretary of the party committee made short, energetic gestures. The Party! Isn’t it the highest thing that we have? How can you hold things back ... before the Party?! How can you not open up?... The Party?! The Party does not punish, it is our conscience. Remember what Lenin said...

“Ten pistol barrels pointed at his face would not have scared Lyovka Rubin. Neither a cold punishment cell, nor exile to Solovki would have torn the truth from him. But before the Party?! — He could not keep secrets and lie in this black and red

confessional.

“Rubin revealed when and where his cousin had been, and what he had done.

“And the woman-confessor fell silent.

“But the polite guest in yellow shoes said: ‘That means, if I have understood you correctly...’ And he read what was written down on a piece of paper.

“‘Now sign. Right here.’

“Lyovka recoiled.

“‘Who are you? You’re not the Party!’

“‘Why not the Party?’ The guest was offended. ‘I, too, am a party member. I am an investigator of the GPU.’”<sup>18</sup>

At the beginning of the 1930s, thousands of such Rubins passed through a similar procedure, which combined an appeal to their “party feeling” with the threat of an unavoidable and cruel punishment for refusal to “lay down one’s arms.” The denunciations against “Trotskyists” obtained with these methods seemingly anticipated the wave of future denunciations in 1937.

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1. *Avrora*, 1989, № 10, p. 13.

2. *Sotsialisticheskaia industriia*, 8 November 1989.

3. Martemian Riutin, *Na koleni ne vstanu*, [I Won’t Get on My Knees] M., 1992, pp. 31–32.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 296.

5. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 27, p. 14.

6. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 23.

7. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 28, p. 3.

8. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 23.

9. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 28, p. 5.

10. *Kommunist*, 1990, № 11, pp. 105–106.

11. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 28, p. 4.

12. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 23.

13. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 29–30, p. 12.

14. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 28, p. 5.

15. *Ogonyok*, 1988, № 27, p. 5.

16. *Biulleten’ oppositsii*, 1932, № 28, pp. 5–6.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

18. *Novyi mir*, 1991, № 4, pp. 90–91.

## 32. The Ideological Offensive of Stalinism

Stalin understood very well what kind of threat to his Bonapartist omnipotence was contained in the ideological resoluteness of Trotsky and his supporters in the Soviet Union. He therefore made one attempt after another to shift the confrontation with the opposition onto the plane of accusing it of counter-revolutionary activity, thereby avoiding the need to conduct an ideological polemic with these opponents. However, he was forced in one way or another to respond to Trotsky's articles in the communist press, both in the Soviet Union and abroad. Those who were officially allowed to read Trotsky's works, in order to "ideologically rebuff" them, provided several excerpts from these works in their polemical articles. Almost all of these "critics of Trotskyism" were executed during the years of the Great Purge. Only the most unscrupulous "fighters against Trotskyism," who replaced an analysis of Trotsky's arguments with shameless and unbridled invective, managed to survive the purges and preserve their positions on the ideological Olympus. A few of them, such as Ilyichëv, Pospelov, Ponomarëv, Mitin, Yudin and Konstantinov, maintained and even strengthened their positions as "leading theoreticians" after Stalin's death, having been elevated to the highest posts as academics and members of the Central Committee.

All of these people were promoted in the course of the ideological campaigns conducted by Stalin from the end of the 1920s, in order to weaken the ideological influence of the Left Opposition and other forces hostile to him in the party. Their task was to drive all dissenting thinkers from the intellectual arena.

Stalin paid special attention to literature. After 1927, the active "Trotskyist" A. K. Voronsky was removed from participation in the literary movement. He had been main editor of the journal *Red Virgin Soil*, where he had gathered the country's best literary forces. Following this move, Stalin decided to make RAPP (the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) his main base of support in conducting literary policy. This change can be seen in the "Letter to Writer-Communists in RAPP," written by him on 28 February 1929.

In this letter, while widely using his favorite analogies to military matters, Stalin scolded his addressees for the fact that "RAPP, apparently, is not able to correctly build a literary front and arrange forces on this front in such a way to naturally achieve victory in the battle, and that also means victory in the war against 'the class enemy.' Poor is the military leader who is not able to find the appropriate place along his front both for shock divisions and weak ones, and for the cavalry, and for the artillery, and for regular units, and for partisan detachments. A military leader who is incapable of taking into account all these characteristics of all these different units and of using them in different ways in the interests of a united and indivisible front — forgive me, Lord, but what kind of a military leader is that? I fear that RAPP sometimes smacks of precisely such a military leader."<sup>1</sup> It is natural that these words prompted the members of RAPP to apply "militarized" methods on the "literary front."

While mildly criticizing the leaders of RAPP for separate “excesses,” Stalin left them no doubt that he envisioned their role as “military leaders” in literature, and felt that their “overall line” was “basically correct.” “You, and only you, are called upon to lead the extremely complex front of Soviet fiction,” Stalin emphasized. “... As for my relations with RAPP, they have remained just as close and cordial as they were before now. This does not mean that I refuse to criticize their mistakes, as I understand them.”<sup>2</sup>



*The Secretariat of RAPP (from left to right): M. V. Luzgin, B. Illesh, V. M. Kirshon, L. Averbakh, F. I. Panferov, A. A. Fadeev, I. Makariev.*

These directives from Stalin were set in an editorial article in *Pravda*, which contained a summons, “while basing itself on the main proletarian organization (VOAPP),<sup>3</sup> and through it, to go forward to resolve the enormous tasks standing before the party on the literary front.”<sup>4</sup> From this moment, the role of RAPP changed abruptly. From an organization, although influential but generally on equal footing with other literary groupings, it turned into an organization occupying a monopoly position in the literary movement.

In accordance with the general spirit of ideological life in this period, RAPP’s criticism insisted on a sharp intensification of the class struggle in literature; it accused Vsevolod Ivanov, Leonid Leonov, Ilya Selvinsky and other Soviet writers of a “shift to the right”; it found an “apology for the kulaks” in the works of Andrei Platonov, Konstantin Fedin, Nikolai Kliuev and Sergei Klychkov. “Right-wing” and “bourgeois” tendencies were discovered in the writings of Mikhail Bulgakov, Boris Pilnyak and others. The essence of the mistakes made by a whole group of poets (Eduard Bagritsky, Mikhail Svetlov, Mikhail Golodny and others) was seen to be that they, “in their individual inclinations, often without being conscious of them, are working for our class enemy.”<sup>5</sup>



The distorted understanding of the class approach to artistic phenomena, found in RAPP's criticism, was bound up with a rejection of the concept of "humanism." "No form of humanism in periods of sharpened class battles can strengthen and unify the working class in its social practice,"<sup>6</sup> said an official RAPP instruction of that time. RAPP's general secretary, Leopold Averbakh saw the basic flaw of Andrei Platonov's story, "Doubting Makar," to be the "propaganda of humanism," the fact that the writer refused to consider 'class hatred' a truly human quality."<sup>7</sup> The RAPP critic, Dmitry Maznin, wrote about the petty-bourgeois essence of Sholokhov's works on the basis that "the honeyed water of hypocritical-priestly, all-forgiving mercy, the vilest humanism, is an expression of the clear influence of hostile class forces on Sholokhov."<sup>8</sup> Ivan Kataev was accused of the following: "passionate faith in man, ... a love for people erases the class dividing-lines in his works," and "humanism in his writing ... dominates over class proletarian morality."<sup>9</sup>



*Mikhail Sholokhov*  
(1905–1984)



*Aleksandr Afinogenov*  
(1904–1941)

Not limiting himself to unleashing and supporting pogrom-like campaigns on the "literary front," Stalin directly decided the fate of various fictional works. Thus, in 1931, a famous conversation took place in Gorky's apartment between Stalin and Sholokhov about the third book of *The Quiet Don*, which describes the Veshenskaia Cossack uprising against Soviet power in 1919. Journals and publishing houses had not dared to print this book, not only because it contradicted the accepted interpretation of events in the civil war, but also because the depiction of the Veshenskaia uprising might create associations in the mind of readers with the anti-kolkhoz uprisings that were sweeping across the country.

As Sholokhov recalled, Stalin began the conversation about the book with a question about where the author had acquired material about the excesses by the Don Bureau of the CC RKP(b) and the Revvoensovet [Revolutionary Military Council] of the Southern front with regard to the Cossacks. Sholokhov understood that such a turn in the conversation was no accident; he knew that one of the leaders of the Don Bureau in 1919 had been Syrtsov, recently persecuted, and the RVS of the Southern

front contained Sokolnikov and other Bolsheviks who subsequently had become oppositionists, and who in any case were not part of Stalin's inner circle. The resourceful writer immediately found a response that was able to satisfy the leader. He said that he had built the conception of the third book around the fact that "Trotskyists" had "rained down massive acts of repression against the Cossacks, who had opened the front. The Cossacks, who were warlike people, rose up against Trotsky's treachery, and later tumbled into the camp of counter-revolution ... Here, essentially, lay the tragedy of the people." This explanation was satisfactory enough for Stalin to abruptly change his mind, even though he had initially expressed concern that publication of the third volume "would give great pleasure to the White-Guardists." He declared that "the portrayal of events in the third book of *The Quiet Don* is working in our favor, for the benefit of the revolution" and therefore "we will publish the third book of *The Quiet Don*."<sup>10</sup>

Even more curious is the story of Stalin's "editing" of the play by Aleksandr Afinogenov, "The Lie," accepted in 1932 for production by several Moscow theaters, but not approved by the censors. In this work, the playwright, who had viewed his task to be the exposure of "camouflaged Trotskyists," nevertheless did not fall into caricature, but tried to objectively present the positions of the opposing forces in the play; by doing so, to use the language of the time, "he was offering a tribune to the enemy." The play told of illegal meetings of oppositionists who discussed the situation in the country, and it revealed the atmosphere of fear, suspicion, surveillance, and denunciations that reigned in Soviet society. One of its main heroes, Nakatov, tried to open the eyes of those around him to the trampling of Bolshevik traditions, and found understanding from the main heroine of the play, the young worker, Nina.

Feeling that, in the end, the play served to affirm the "general line," Afinogenov asked Stalin in the fall of 1932, at the time of their meeting, to familiarize himself with the play. Stalin agreed to do so. Sending Stalin a finished manuscript six months later, Afinogenov wrote that he would be delighted by each comment from "dear Iosif Vissarionovich," by "each note in the margins."<sup>11</sup> Stalin "worked over" the manuscript with enormous attentiveness, covering it not only with comments, but also corrections. In the first few pages, he had marked a sentence that told how Nakatov had been in the opposition, and for this "he was removed from the major leaders and sent to be deputy director of a barbed-wire and nail factory."<sup>12</sup> A few pages later, Stalin crossed out a monologue by Nakatov, directed at Nina and clearly showing his "Trotskyist" views:

"We became Bolsheviks in an unceasing struggle against mighty opponents ... But you are growing up on ready-made slogans. You are told — either take this at our word, or keep quiet. Truths that are absorbed as directives are becoming your only baggage. ... You are ordered to consider them the truth. But what if this isn't the case? What if 'the truth' which you believe is basically a lie? And you are arguing ... about an ultimate untruth, without seeing that the entire country is lying and deceiving you, for the country itself has been deceived."<sup>13</sup>

Later, Stalin crossed out a major monologue by Nina, and wrote in the margins of the manuscript: "Why this dismal and tedious gibberish?" This testimony showed that "Trotskyist" ideas were finding a response among the young people of that time:

“There is dust over the whole country from grout and cement. We are building. And this dust covers our eyes, blocking out life; we don’t see that people are growing up as monsters, as mutes, and are indifferent to everything. When a tramway runs over a woman, we will start to swear that once again traffic will be held up. It’s a double life. ... We reassure ourselves — that’s the kind of life we need, we are new, we are good. We praise ourselves, we write beautiful words, paint portraits, give medals — and it’s all for show, for a signboard. And everyone knows this, everyone has gotten used to it, like getting used to a paper ruble where it’s written: ‘mandatory acceptance according to gold exchange rate.’ Nobody will take this ruble into Torgsin. That’s the way it is with all our slogans — at meetings they are applauded, but at home people give their own opinion, which is different. Because of this, there are no longer any strong convictions; yesterday there was a leader, and everyone flattered him, but tomorrow they removed him and no one offers him their hand. Earlier Bolsheviks went to prison for every word of their beliefs, spent time at hard labor, but today’s — as soon as they’re barely touched, they’re writing letters and renouncing their entire lives ... We march in demonstrations for so many years and believe you for many years, but none of this is lasting. We have nobody to compare with, and they don’t let us compare, and we don’t know *what tomorrow’s general line will be* — *today’s line is tomorrow’s deviation* (Stalin underlined the italicized words – *V. R.*). I’m tired of living this way, I would like to figure out everything myself, and understand it, so that if tormentors of the revolution descend upon me, I will hold my own under torture, I will remain firm. But now we have feet of clay, because now it is easy to be firm, since there is one party in the country and this party is an iron force. And we hide behind its back ... We are lying and deceiving and acting mean and hating each other, like a hundred years ago, and perhaps even worse.”<sup>14</sup>

Stalin was especially displeased with the culminating episode of the play, in which the Deputy People’s Commissar, Ryadavoi, a longtime comrade of Nakatov, has an argument with him and decides to inform the “organs” about his views. Nina, who is upset by this, shoots at Ryadavoi. After crossing out this “terrorist” scene three times, Stalin wrote: “I advise you to re-work all the rest and get by without Nina’s gunshot and its consequences.”<sup>15</sup>

Of course, in Afinogenov’s play there were also philippics by “positive heroes” against Nakatov and lofty praise for Stalin, who “leads us, having torn off the masks of many highly-educated leaders who had unlimited opportunity and yet turned out to be bankrupt.” However, all these were overridden by Nakatov’s comments about “the system of Mohammedan (Stalin changed this word to ‘command’) socialism,” about “higher-ups” who are raising “janissaries ready to hurl themselves at anyone who doubts the correctness of the line,” and so forth.<sup>16</sup>

Stalin’s “conclusion” with regard to the play was unequivocal: “The play cannot be released in this form.”<sup>17</sup>

Having concluded that reworking the play in the spirit of Stalin’s comments would allow it to see the light of day, Afinogenov created a new variant and sent it to Stalin; at the same time, he asked that the results of his work on the play be looked at in Moscow’s theaters. On the very next day, the following resolution from Stalin appeared on this letter: “Comrade Afinogenov! I consider the second variant of the play to be unsuccessful.”<sup>18</sup> After this reply, the author was forced to ask the theaters to remove his play from production.

Stalin devoted no less attention to the situation in the realm of philosophy than to works of literature. In October 1930, a session of the Presidium of the Communist Academy discussed the question “About Disagreements on the Philosophical Front.” The session amounted to a working over of the academician Abram M. Deborin, senior editor of the leading philosophical journal, *Under the Banner of Marxism*. Particular zeal in criticizing Deborin and his pupils, the famous philosophers Karev, Sten and Luppol, was displayed by the most fervent Stalinists, both “old” (Yaroslavsky) and

“young” (Mitin).

Soon Deborin was contacted by the head of the culture and enlightenment department of the Central Committee, Aleksei Stetsky, who announced that henceforth everyone was required to confirm one authority in all spheres of scientific knowledge, including philosophy — the authority of Stalin. Soon after this, Deborin was visited by the young philosophers Mitin, Yudin and Raltsevich. They presented him with the demand that he publicly condemn his own students and declare Stalin a great philosopher. Knowing full well what he was risking, Deborin categorically refused to compromise his own scholarly conscience and yield to this ultimatum.

After this, Stalin decided to intervene directly in the philosophical debates. He participated in a session of the bureau of the party cell at the Institute of Red Professors, and delivered a speech in which he ordered a pogrom in all the social sciences:

“Turn over and dig through the entire dung-heap that has piled up in philosophy and natural science. Smash everything that has been written by the Deborin group. Sten and Karev can be driven out ... Deborin, in my opinion, is a hopeless man, however we have to keep him in the editorial board so that there is someone there to beat.”<sup>19</sup>



*Abram Moiseevich Deborin  
and Maksim Gorky*

Stalin’s directives were reinforced in his replies to questions from participants at the session. In response to the question: “Do we need to connect the struggle in theory with political deviations?” he replied: “You not only can, but you must, without fail.” In answering the question, “On what should the institute focus its attention in the philosophical realm?” Stalin declared:

“The main problem is to beat. Beat in all directions, even where you have not beaten before. Hegel, for the Deborinists, is an icon. You must expose Plekhanov. He was always condescending toward Lenin. And with Engels, not everything is correct. In his comments about the Erfurt Program there is a short passage about growing into socialism. Bukharin tried to utilize this. It wouldn’t be bad if somewhere in our work we

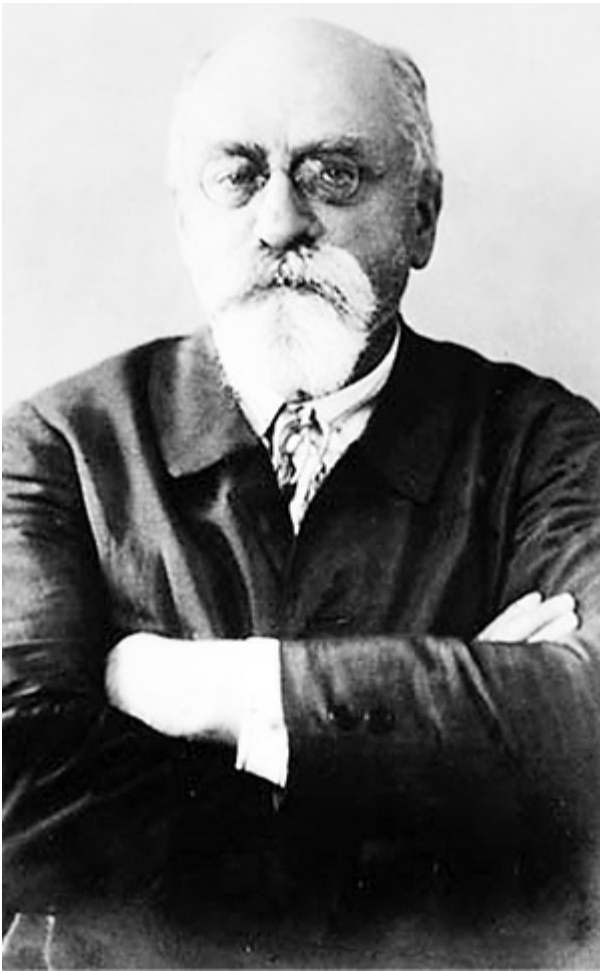
would strike at Engels.”<sup>20</sup>

These directives were formalized in organizational decisions. On 26 January 1931, a decree was published by the Central Committee, “On the Journal *Under the Banner of Marxism*,” in which the Deborin group was accused of divorcing philosophy from politics and of sliding “in a number of the most important questions to positions of Menshevizing idealism.”<sup>21</sup> In this definition, that had been thought up by Stalin, the word “Menshevizing” suggested that Deborin had been a Menshevik before the revolution, and the word “idealism” alluded to his positive attitude toward Hegel’s philosophy.

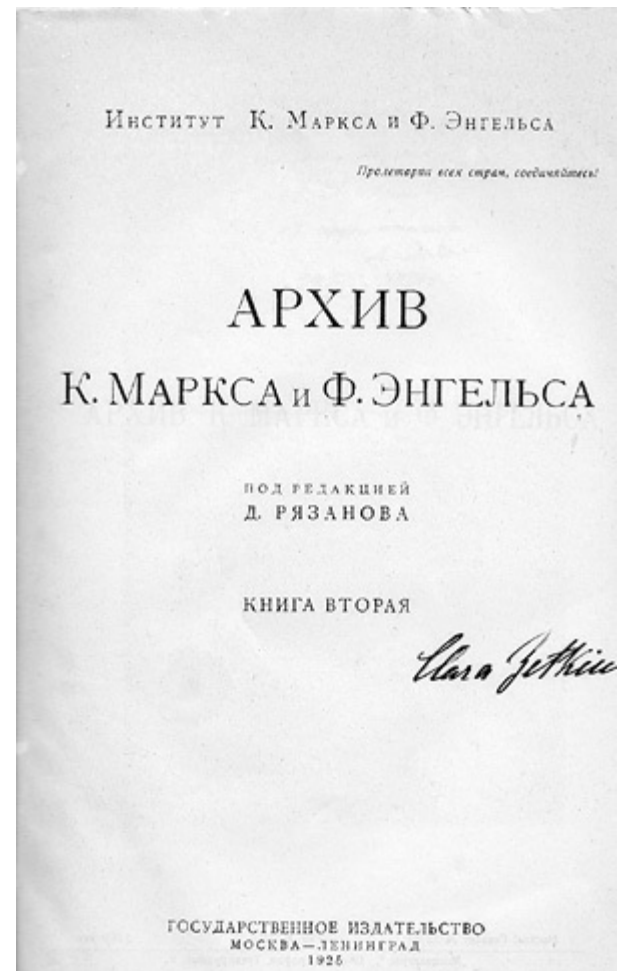
From this time on, the term “new philosophical leadership” appeared in the press, designating the young careerists Mitin and Yudin, whose “scholarly creativity” was confined to a multitude of



pamphlets and articles glorifying the “theoretical genius” of Stalin and demanding the “extirpation of the agents of the class enemy,” “the agents of Trotskyism” in all the social sciences.



*David Borisovich Riazanov  
(1870–1938)*



*Marx-Engels Archive,  
Book Two, edited by Riazanov, 1925.*

As noted in the “Riutin Platform,”

“the rout of the Deborin group because they had not displayed enough zeal in apologetically defending Stalin’s policy and in praising his theoretically illiterate and stupid articles, ... completed the final theoretical devastation of the party.

“At the present time, what is active on the theoretical front is everything that is the most unprincipled and dishonest in the party. Here at work is a true gang of careerists and lickspittles (Mitin, Yudin, Raltsevich, Kolman and others), who in their theoretical service to Stalin have shown themselves to be genuine prostitutes.”<sup>22</sup>

It is not out of place to add that, in the future, this “gang” (with the exception of Raltsevich, who fell into the meat-grinder in 1937) played the leading role in exterminating the best Soviet philosophers and in declaring as “bourgeois” the most important branches of modern science: genetics, cybernetics, the theory of relativity, and so forth.

Stalin devoted much more attention to the “historical front.” One of the main ideological means of establishing Stalinism was to spread false versions about the history of Bolshevism and the October Revolution. Having begun as early as 1924, the campaign of falsification assumed enormous proportions by the beginning of the 1930s and spilled over into ruthless reprisals against honest Marxist historians. Following the harsh treatment of scholars belonging to the oppositions, a new victim of these reprisals became David B. Riazanov, the founder and director of the Marx-Engels

Institute. Enjoying immense authority in the international workers' movement, in the 1920s Riazanov had received from the German Social Democrats — guardians of the archive of Marx and Engels — photocopies of many unpublished works from this archive. Riazanov directed the first publication of *The German Ideology*, *The Dialectics of Nature*, manuscripts of the young Marx, and a significant portion of the correspondence written by Marx and Engels. In 1930, Riazanov's sixtieth birthday was officially celebrated. In an anthology devoted to this jubilee, Clara Zetkin wrote: "On the pedestal of a magnificent monument to the creative scientific work of the Soviet state, the name of 'Riazanov' will be carved in indelible letters."<sup>23</sup>

Riazanov's unwillingness to bargain with his scholarly conscience aroused Stalin's hatred. In the above-mentioned conversation at the Institute of Red Professors, as Stalin listed the names of those who should be "beaten," he placed special emphasis on one more person: "Don't forget Riazanov. In general, the Institute of Marx and Engels has escaped our attention."<sup>24</sup>

To victimize Riazanov, use was made of the circumstance that several former Mensheviks were working in his Institute, mainly translating the writings of Marx and Engels. In the 1930s, they were arrested and then placed on trial in the case of the "Union Bureau." Some of them "confessed" to engaging, along with Riazanov, in "wrecking activity on the historical front." In February 1931, Riazanov was expelled from the party and sent into administrative exile in Saratov, where he worked as a consultant in the university's library until 1937, when he was arrested for a second time and then shot in 1938.

In the article, "The Case of Comrade Riazanov," Trotsky revealed the true reasons for accusing the old revolutionary of "betraying the party":

"Riazanov is charged, no more and no less, with participation in a conspiracy of Mensheviks and SRs, who are connected, in turn, with a conspiracy of the industrial bourgeoisie ... We have never doubted for a minute that comrade Riazanov did not participate in any conspiracy. But where, in that case, did the accusation come from? If it has been invented, then by whom and with what aim? ... Who needs a world-wide scandal around the name of Riazanov?"<sup>25</sup>

Trotsky reminded the reader that, in recent years, Riazanov had withdrawn from active participation in political life. "In this regard, he shared the fate of very many old party members who, with despair in their souls, moved away from the inner life of the party by withdrawing into economics or cultural work. Only this self-renunciation gave Riazanov the possibility of saving his Institute from devastation during the entire post-Lenin period." However, even remaining in such a neutral position proved to be impossible.

"The life of the party, particularly since the time of the Sixteenth Congress, has turned into a continuous test of loyalty to the one and only leader ... But Riazanov has been organically incapable of behaving like a scoundrel, playing the toady, or engaging in an outpouring of feelings of loyalty."

For this reason, a group of young "red professors" were sent into his Institute, who "usually have little knowledge of Marxism, but have acquired a skill when it comes to dirty tricks, slander and false denunciations." This group engaged in provocative libel against the old scholar. Of course,

"if Riazanov somewhere, even if in only a few words, had hinted that Marx and Engels were only the predecessors of Stalin, then all the intrigues of the young scoundrels would immediately crumble into dust, and no Krylenko (the prosecutor in the trial

of the “Menshevik center” – *V. R.*) would dare to call Riazanov to account for his indulgence toward the Menshevik translators. But Riazanov had not done this. And the general secretary could not reconcile himself with anything less.”<sup>26</sup>

In the victimization of Riazanov, Trotsky saw a new symptom:

“Having achieved omnipotence through the apparatus, Stalin felt inwardly much weaker than he ever had ... He needed daily confirmation of his right to the role of dictator. Thus came Riazanov’s turn ... The old revolutionary said: ‘I am ready to serve silently, biting my tongue; I cannot be an enthusiastic toady.’ That is why Riazanov fell under the party’s justice system run by the Yaroslavskys. Afterwards, Yagoda served up the incriminating evidence.”<sup>27</sup>

Having rid himself of the last great Bolshevik historian (not counting Pokrovsky, whose “exposure” unfolded a bit later, after his death in April 1932), Stalin decided at the end of 1931 to step forward himself as a historian of Marxism and the international workers’ movement. His letter to the editors of the journal, *Proletarian Revolution*, “On Some Questions of the History of Bolshevism,” marked the beginning of a noisy ideological campaign directed at a definitive ban on any objective coverage in the Soviet and foreign communist press of either Trotsky’s past activity or his positions in the contemporary political struggle. Stalin demanded an end to “rotten liberalism ... with regard to Trotskyism, even if it has been beaten and unmasked.” He considered the view of Trotskyism as a faction in the world communist movement to be “bungling, bordering on a crime.”

“In actual fact, Trotskyism long ago ceased to be a faction of communism. In actual fact, Trotskyism is an advanced detachment of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, conducting a struggle against communism, against Soviet power, against the construction of socialism in the USSR.”<sup>28</sup>



*Vladimir Ilyich Lenin*  
(1870–1924)



*Rosa Luxemburg*  
(1871–1919)

This new formulation, which firmly entered into the party lexicon, completed a five-year campaign to identify “Trotskyism” with counter-revolution, and it obligated communists to view Trotsky and “Trotskyists,” not as ideological opponents, but as the most vicious political enemies.

Immediately after the publication of Stalin’s letter, all of Trotsky’s works were removed from the libraries, including those published before his deportation from the country, as well as books in which there were references to these works, or contained any mention of his revolutionary activity. During searches, discovery of such books in personal libraries became grounds for attaching them as material evidence to cases of “counter-revolutionary Trotskyist activity.”

Stalin’s article and Kaganovich’s speech, which developed the article’s main points at a jubilee gathering devoted to the tenth anniversary of the Institute of Red Professors in December 1931, sent a signal to the unbridled struggle against “Trotskyist contraband,” not only in the USSR, but also in foreign communist parties. The leading organs of the European communist parties adopted special resolutions endorsing Stalin’s article. Thorez, Togliatti and other leaders of the Comintern actively joined in the rewriting of history according to Stalin’s new directives.

An accompanying goal of Stalin’s article was to strike a new blow at the left wing of Social-Democracy, having presented its predecessors (above all, Rosa Luxemburg) as enemies of Leninism. In response to this calumny, Trotsky wrote an article, “Hands Off Rosa Luxemburg!” He recalled how Lenin had Luxemburg in mind when he quoted the old couplet: “From time to time, eagles can swoop down lower than hens, but hens can never soar beneath the clouds.” Trotsky wrote:

“Precisely! Precisely! For this very reason, Stalin should be more careful in disbursing his malicious mediocrity, when the issue at hand is figures of such magnitude as Rosa Luxemburg.”<sup>[29](#)</sup>

Trotsky showed that, in Stalin’s assessments of Lenin as supposedly being an irreconcilable opponent of “Luxemburgism,” he was not only maliciously distorting Lenin’s views, but contradicting his own statements of preceding years. Trotsky noted:

“Stalin is once again caught red-handed. Is he writing about questions which are completely beyond his understanding? Or is he consciously using marked cards in playing with the fundamental questions of Marxism? Posing such an alternative of the question is not correct. In actual fact, both one and the other are true. Stalin’s falsifications are conscious, insofar as they are dictated at each given moment by very distinct personal interests. At the same time they are semi-conscious, insofar as primitive ignorance places no obstacles before his arbitrary approach to theory.”<sup>[30](#)</sup>

Stalin’s letter, “On Some Questions of the History of Bolshevism,” marked the beginning of the persecution of many Bolshevik historians, including even such a dedicated Stalinist as Yaroslavsky, who soon confessed that he had insufficiently portrayed Stalin’s role in the development of Bolshevism, in his own historical works.

The pogrom-like campaign that was unleashed touched the authors of all the textbooks on party history, and all the historians of the October Revolution. A particularly sharp blow was directed at Aleksandr Shliapnikov, the author of the books, *The Revolution of 1905*, *On the Eve of 1917*, and *The Year 1917* (the last book consisted of four volumes, published from 1923 through 1931). On 8 January 1932, *Pravda* published a two-page article, “1917 in a Menshevik Light,” written by a group of “red professors” headed by Pospelov. In this article, Shliapnikov’s work was called “a foul



Trotskyist libel,” “outrageous slander,” “monstrous falsification,” and so forth. The main reason for these charges was that Shliapnikov — himself an active participant in the February and October Revolutions — “did not depict the leading and directing role of comrade Stalin in the October insurrection” and even wrote about Stalin’s mistakes in 1917. After the appearance of this article, the Politburo adopted a resolution instructing Shliapnikov “to acknowledge his mistakes and reject them in the press. In the case that comrade Shliapnikov refuses on his part to fulfill this demand in a five-day period, he must be expelled from the ranks of the VKP(b).”<sup>31</sup> After this resolution, Shliapnikov turned to the Politburo, promising to correct formulations which “might give grounds for an incorrect interpretation.” *Pravda* soon published a statement in which he acknowledged his “mistakes” and



*Aleksandr Gavrilovich Shliapnikov*  
(1885–1937)



*The Year 1917, four volumes,*  
1923–1931.

vowed that he would take all measures to correct them.<sup>32</sup>

The 1932 “Riutin Platform” stressed that, in Stalin’s “historical” letter:

“The strength of proof is inversely proportional to the strength of the shouts emitted by the leader who has become swell-headed, gone too far, and become openly insolent, but who feels, both in the party and the country, as if he is in his own *votchina* [fiefdom], where he is free to execute or pardon anyone ... From now on, party history will be written, or to be more precise, fabricated, all over again. ... To falsify the history of the party under the flag of its defense; to exaggerate some facts while ignoring others; to concoct even more facts; to raise a mediocrity onto the pedestal of a ‘historic figure’ — this will be the essence of revising the textbooks on party history.”<sup>33</sup>

1. *Znamia*, 1990, № 1, p. 199.

- [2.](#) Ibid., pp. 199–200.
- [3.](#) VOAPP – Vsesoiuznoe ob’’edinenie assotsiatsii proletarskikh pisatelei [The All-Union Alliance of the Associations of Proletarian Writers], among which the leading association was RAPP.
- [4.](#) *Pravda*, 4 December 1929.
- [5.](#) *Burzhuaznye tendentsii v sovremennoi literature* [Bourgeois tendencies in contemporary literature], M., 1930, pp. 135–136.
- [6.](#) *Na literaturnom postu*, 1930, № 21–22, p. 29.
- [7.](#) *Na literaturnom postu*, 1929, № 23, p. 17.
- [8.](#) *RAPP*, 1931, № 1, p. 167.
- [9.](#) *Literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 5, M., 1931, p. 155.
- [10.](#) *Novyi mir*, 1988, № 9, p. 267.
- [11.](#) V. A. Kumanev, *30-e gody v sud’bakh otechestvennoi intelligentsii*, [The 1930s in the Fate of the Nation’s Intelligentsia] M., 1991, p. 270.
- [12.](#) Ibid., p. 271.
- [13.](#) Ibid.
- [14.](#) Ibid., pp. 271–272.
- [15.](#) Ibid., p. 273.
- [16.](#) Ibid., p. 272.
- [17.](#) Ibid., p. 274.
- [18.](#) Ibid.
- [19.](#) *Oktiabr’*, 1988, № 12, p. 69.
- [20.](#) Ibid.
- [21.](#) *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniiakh*, vol. 5, p. 264.
- [22.](#) *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 417.
- [23.](#) *Na boevom postu. Sbornik k shestidesiatiletiiu D. B. Riazanova*, M., 1930, p. 23.
- [24.](#) *Politicheskoe obrazovanie*, 1989, № 13, p. 85.
- [25.](#) *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1931, № 21–22, p. 19–21 [Cf.: “The Case of Comrade Ryazanov,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, pp. 192, 194, 196].
- [26.](#) Ibid., p. 21 [Ibid, p. 196].
- [27.](#) Ibid.
- [28.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13, pp. 98–99 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, p. 101].
- [29.](#) *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1932, № 28, p. 14 [Cf.: “Hands Off Rosa Luxemburg!,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)*, pp. 136–138].
- [30.](#) Ibid., p. 15 [Ibid., p. 140].
- [31.](#) *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 114.
- [32.](#) *Pravda*, 9 March 1932.
- [33.](#) *Reabilitatsiia*, pp. 335–336.

# 33. Leaders of the Earlier Oppositions at the Beginning of the 1930s

Under conditions of the economic and political crisis that was reaching its limit, and the ever greater accumulation of lies and falsifications spread by Stalin's clique, a crisis emerged in the world outlook of the party. As the "Riutin Platform" stressed, "this crisis is presently deeply concealed, for the time being it finds its outer expression only in rare individual occasions; the press of terror prevents it from bursting to the surface, but it has already seized a rather significant layer of the thinking portion of the party that has a truly communist outlook ... A significant portion of party members now live simply with hollowed-out souls, eaten away by a general skepticism and disillusionment."<sup>1</sup>

This last description applied most of all to many leaders of the earlier oppositions, who, after passing through ritual ceremonies of repentance, continued to hold responsible posts. Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsy, and Pyatakov remained members of the Central Committee; Dogadov and Sokolnikov remained candidate members of the CC. Party circles were ever more sharply bewildered by the fact that these people, who in the past had been distinguished by their courage and independent judgment, did not now dare to utter a single critical word about the fatal policies of Stalin's leadership. "What, then, explains their silence?" — asked one of the correspondents of the *Bulletin*. "Can it really be that it is only naked fear for their personal fate? But can anyone imagine a situation more terrible and more undignified than the one in which many of the former leaders, theoreticians and politicians have been placed by the Stalinist bureaucracy, to be sure, with the direct participation of the 'victims' themselves? It would seem that they have nothing to lose but the chains of humiliation and impotence. Or perhaps they have just completely and finally exhausted themselves, and have nothing left in their souls? Most likely it is precisely that."<sup>2</sup>

Essentially, the same topic was covered in the diary entries of Aleksandra M. Kollontai, who met with many of the "old men" at the time of her visit to Moscow in June 1932. Noting that the "old men" were always criticizing, finding fault, ridiculing, and saying angrily that it was impossible to continue this way, Kollontai provided a typical example of what she heard: "We are losing the correct course. The compass is damaged." Kollontai added to this: "If you ask what they propose, what measures? There are none."<sup>3</sup>

Developing an alternative to Stalin's policy would have demanded that the former leaders of the oppositions pass from feeble grumbling to more serious conclusions and actions. Having experienced their own humiliations and seen the fate of the "Trotskyists" who continued to languish in prisons and exile, these people understood that if they shifted to any forms of struggle against Stalin, they might lose not only their honor and dignity, but also their personal freedom. In addition, to an even greater

degree than rank-and-file oppositionists, by the chain of their unceasing repentance and vows of loyalty to the “general line,” they had been drawn into the regime of duplicity that had been established in the party. A correspondent of the *Bulletin* wrote:

“I could boldly say, that out of ten party members, eight are consumed with doubt. In private conversations they speak of this, but at party cells and conferences, all decisions are made ... unanimously. Why? ‘But what would be the point? If I perish in Siberia, by doing so I wouldn’t be helping anything either.’”<sup>4</sup>

It was precisely such opinions, apparently, that were characteristic of leaders of the Right Opposition, who had sharply criticized Stalin at the end of the 1920s, but, from the beginning of the 1930s, when his errors and crimes had grown many times over, had refused any kind of struggle against him. Thus, Bukharin, who was traveling through Ukraine in the summer of 1930, was shaken by the spectacle of children whose bellies were swollen from hunger, begging for alms at railway substations. As he was telling his friend Larin about this, Bukharin exclaimed: “If more than ten years after the revolution we can see such a thing, then why in the world did we carry it out!” He fell onto the sofa and began to sob hysterically.<sup>5</sup> However, in his public statements in 1930 and subsequent years, Bukharin never stopped castigating his own past “mistakes” and praising the “victories” of Stalin’s leadership.

It was clear even to people distant from the party that, by capitulating to Stalin, the former “leaders” were once and for all losing their own personality, their will-power, their moral and intellectual qualities. Thus, in 1930, Mikhail Prishvin made the remarkable entry in his diary: “Do such people as Bukharin fully realize that, in publicly renouncing themselves, they at the same time are personally dying?” Renunciations were dictated by the vain hope “at some time, at some convenient opportunity, to return the human soul to the surviving sheath of the person who had himself disappeared.”<sup>6</sup>

The extortion of ever newer confessions inexorably led these people down an inclined slope. The unnatural way of life which they were compelled to lead can be seen by the fact that the members of the “Bukharin troika” almost stopped seeing each other, because they feared being accused of continuing their “factional activity.” Rykov’s daughter [Natalia Perli] recalled that, after 1930, almost no one ever visited their home. She also told how, at the beginning of the 1930s, she happened to be a witness to her father being insulted by various Stalinists. In the government loge at the Bolshoi Theater,

“Stalin answered my father about something with casual contempt, then all the others (members of the Politburo), as if on command, pounced on Rykov; everyone immediately started talking, loudly, sharply, and maliciously.”<sup>7</sup>



*Aleksandra Kollontai*  
(1872–1952)



The continuous extortions of confessions and vows of loyalty to “the general line” from leaders of the former oppositions did not pursue the goal of affirming any kind of principles, since any principles had lost their value in conditions of endless bureaucratic zigzags. The goal of these extortions, as Trotsky emphasized, amounted to one thing:

“To impress upon the party that any kind of counteraction or resistance, any kind of criticism of the apparatus, any kind of grumbling, even a whisper against the apparatus ... might lead only to repression or to new ideological humiliations. ‘Self-criticism’ serves the same goal from another direction, for it signifies the obligation of party members to criticize what the apparatus is ‘criticizing.’”<sup>8</sup>

Not all the confessions of former oppositionists were hypocritical from beginning to end. In the book *Stalin*, Trotsky referred to evidence from the Bolshevik non-returner, Barmine, that many who had doubts, who vacillated, or who were direct opponents of Stalin at the beginning of the 1930s felt that, despite all his mistakes, failures and crimes, the country was nevertheless moving forward; therefore they had to cast aside all other considerations and work under his leadership.<sup>9</sup>

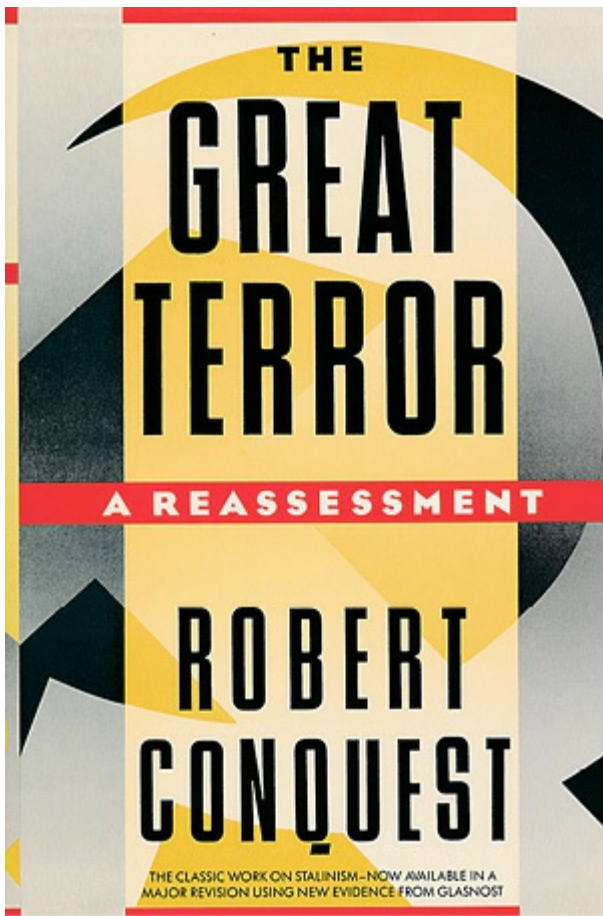
Among the oppositionists, there were also no small number of those who issued declarations of repentance, in order to return to the party and renew underground opposition activity within it. However, they very quickly became convinced that the political conditions of such activity were immeasurably more difficult than the conditions of illegal work done by the Bolsheviks under Tsarism. Constantly feeling the surveillance of the GPU, these people “suffered a true inner crisis; they feared for the future of the party, and many for their own future; they repented, they sincerely returned to secondary work and became obedient, mortally frightened, and completely devoted functionaries.”<sup>10</sup>

The most courageous section of the oppositionists did not lose heart in expectation of better times. They set the same goals for themselves as in the years of the pre-revolutionary underground: an analysis of developing events; preserving their strength for acting at a propitious moment against Stalinism; the establishment and maintenance of connections between all anti-Stalinist forces in the party. Their isolation, that had been a consequence of their earlier political disagreements, was gradually overcome. On the eve of the 1930s, these disagreements had objectively softened, insofar as the evaluation of Stalin’s socioeconomic policy and inner-party regime among the “leftists” and the “rightists” coincided. In the consciousness of the Bukharinists, the “theory of original sin” — of “Trotskyism” — had gradually been effaced. They had invented it in the 1920s and initially they had been guided by it in their criticism of Stalin’s ultra-left course. In 1936, the *Bulletin of the Opposition* published a letter from an exiled oppositionist which described how, when he met in 1932 with former “Bukharinists” (Slepkov, Maretsky and others), he concluded that they “had absolutely changed, and that they did not conceal — of course, in intimate circles — their new attitude toward Trotsky and to Trotskyists.”<sup>11</sup> For their part, the Trotskyists came to the conclusion that, in the name of common tasks in fighting against Stalinism, they must cast aside recollections of their unprincipled persecution by the Bukharinists.

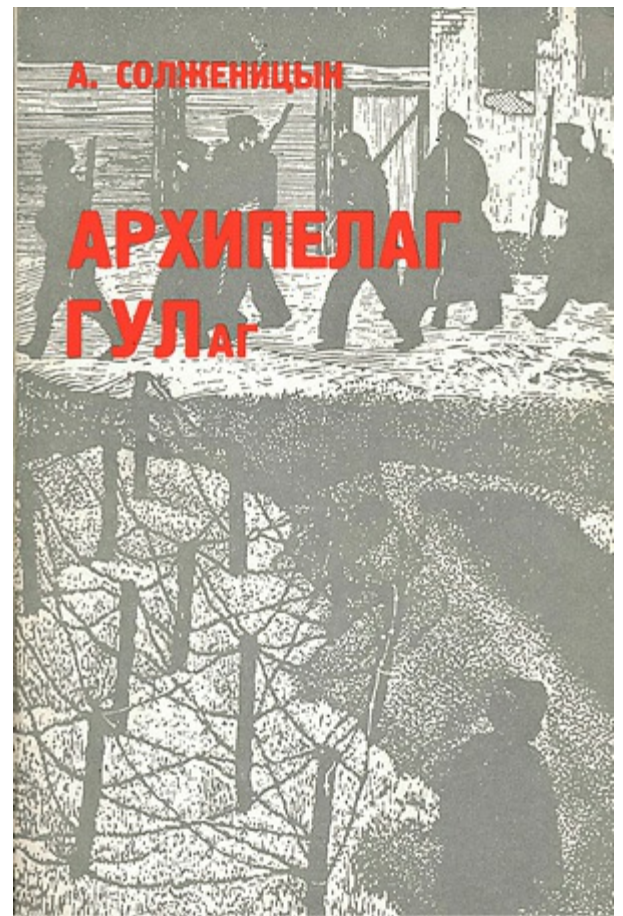
In 1932, a bloc began to form between the participants of all the old opposition tendencies and new anti-Stalinist inner-party groupings. The tragedy of this bloc is that it arose too late, in conditions when the entire repressive Stalinist apparatus had been mobilized to search for underground opposition groups in the party and to ruthlessly victimize them.

In passing on to an analysis of the history of this bloc, we must deal with various historical versions which deny the presence of an inner-party struggle in the 1930s.

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- [1.](#) *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 424.
  - [2.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1932, № 29–30, p. 12.
  - [3.](#) *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1989, № 8, p. 103.
  - [4.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1933, № 35, p. 26.
  - [5.](#) *Znamia*, 1988, № 11, p. 126.
  - [6.](#) *Oktiabr'*, 1989, № 7, p. 179.
  - [7.](#) A. Shelestov, *Vremia Alekseia Rykova*, [The Time of Aleksei Rykov] M., 1989, p. 283.
  - [8.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 12 [Cf.: “Lessons of the Capitulations (Obituary Reflections),” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 80].
  - [9.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin*, vol. 2, p. 262.
  - [10.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 263.
  - [11.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1936, № 51, p. 115.



*Second edition of Robert Conquest's  
The Great Terror, 1990*



*Russian emigré edition of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's Gulag  
Archipelago, 1973*



*Soviet edition of Robert Conquest's*





*Soviet edition of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's Gulag  
Archipelago, 1991*



## 34. Along the Trail of a “Single Version”

In the many historical works of the most variegated ideological orientation, we encounter three identical theses: there was no serious opposition to Stalinism within the party; all confessions at the Moscow Trials were extracted through torture, threats, or promises to preserve one’s life, and had no relation to the truth; all those who were victimized in the 1930s were “innocent” of all charges, including attempts to fight against Stalin and Stalinism.

These positions were shared by the following three groups of authors: (1) Nikita Khrushchev and the ideologists and historians of the “thaw” period who developed his interpretation of events in the 1930s; (2) authors of an openly anti-communist orientation like Robert Conquest and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn; (3) authors of the countless works about Stalinism that appeared in the USSR at the end of the 1980s.



*Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev*  
(1894–1971)

Of course, these general premises were advanced for absolutely different reasons. Let us begin with the causes that prompted Khrushchev and his assistant ideologists to defend this anti-historical version, as they headed the first (after the Twentieth Congress) and the second (after the Twenty-second Congress) waves of the exposures of Stalinism. In the past, all of them had been fervent Stalinists, and they all had taken an active part in the “Great Terror,” or at least in its ideological justification. This determined their paradoxical interpretation of the history of the inner-party struggle: Stalin’s atrocities were called “mistakes,” and any forms of resistance to Stalinism continued to be considered “crimes.” The only “legitimate” display of protest against the “personality cult” that Khrushchev was willing to

consider was the secret voting at the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934, where approximately one-fourth of the delegates had voted against Stalin. It is understandable that Khrushchev’s scheme did not include any more serious forms of struggle against Stalin and Stalinism. Historians who followed this scheme explained the monstrous scale of the repressive measures of the 1930s by simply referring to the negative traits of Stalin’s character and to his pathologically suspicious nature. All other aspects of party history were viewed, as before, in the spirit of *The Short Course of the History of the VKP(b)* — as a chain of uninterrupted victories of the “party’s general line,” gained in the struggle against anti-party tendencies, and most of all against “Trotskyism.” Trotsky was still labelled “the

most pernicious enemy of Leninism,” and he had supposedly lost all his supporters inside the country in the 1930s.<sup>1</sup>

The dissemination of this historical version was facilitated by the fact that all the documents concerning the activity of the oppositions were held, as before, in deep secrecy, and all the active participants of the opposition groups had been killed in the course of the “Great Purge.” The very few members of these groupings, who were fortunate to live long enough to see their rehabilitation after Stalin’s death, faced a difficult future. Even after being released from camps and exile, they were certain that criticism of the “personality cult” had not changed the belief that participation, even in the legal oppositions of the 1920s, was sufficient grounds for criminal prosecution on charges of anti-Soviet activity. For this reason, in order to achieve their own rehabilitation and safely live out their remaining years, they did not dare to tell the whole truth to the “re-investigators” of the 1950s and 1960s about what they knew about the activity of the illegal anti-Stalinist oppositions.

A purely Stalinist attitude toward “Trotskyism” and other anti-Stalinist inner-party tendencies redoubled during the years of stagnation, when many historical “works” appeared, mechanically reproducing the old versions about the “anti-Soviet” and “counter-revolutionary” essence of all inner-party opposition groups, with “Trotskyist” groups at the fore. It is understandable that in these conditions it was impossible to tear apart the Soviet amalgams: the provocative and slanderous “overlay” of accusations of espionage, sabotage, and so forth onto actual facts of the underground battle against Stalinism.

The lack of public openness during the periods of Stalinism and post-Stalinism left such a strong imprint on social consciousness, that even the publication in the first half of the 1960s of excerpts from Fyodor Raskolnikov’s anti-Stalinist articles made a shocking impression on Soviet intellectuals. “Critically thinking” “people of the sixties” found it difficult to understand how a Bolshevik of the 1930s had been able to see and understand what they were only now discovering in bits and pieces. By the way, immediately after Khrushchev’s overthrow in 1964, official propaganda declared Raskolnikov to be a “Trotskyist” and an “anti-Soviet element.” Dissemination in Samizdat of his “Open Letter to Stalin” became an act just as criminal as the distribution of Lenin’s “Testament” in the 1920s.

Evidently, the history of our society and of the entire communist movement would have developed otherwise if the process of de-Stalinization<sup>2</sup> begun by Khrushchev had been continued, and the history



*Fyodor Fyodorovich Raskolnikov  
(1892–1939)*

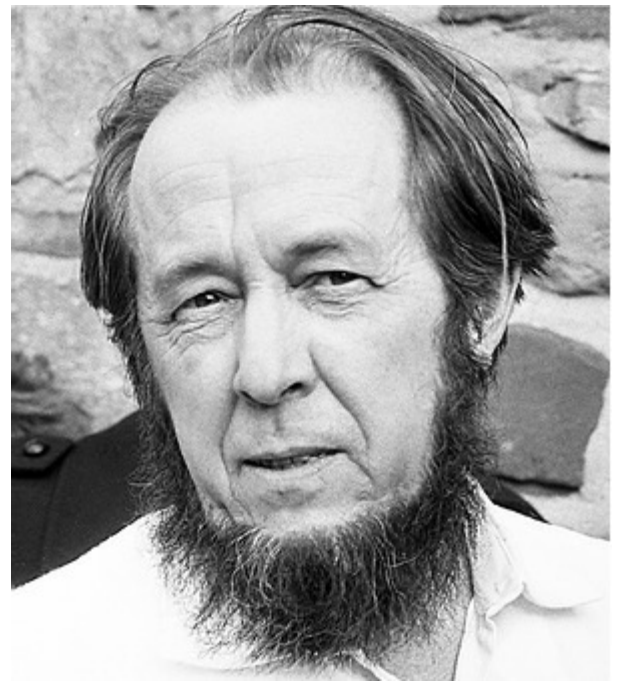
of our society had appeared in a true light during the 1950s and 1960s. For the majority of Soviet people at that time, the concepts of the “October Revolution,” “socialism,” and “Bolshevism” remained the highest intellectual values. The process of freeing mass consciousness from the stereotypes imposed by the Stalin school of falsification would have brought in its wake the rebirth of a genuinely communist mentality. The intellectual movement would have grown into a political one, facilitating a truly socialist renewal of society, i.e., a democratization of the political regime and the liquidation of social privileges. This process could in turn have given an impulse to the economic and social uplifting of countries with nationalized property and a planned economy, to a true demonstration of the historic advantages of socialism.

Intuitively grasping this inevitable chain of causes and effects, the ruling bureaucracy resisted the corrective processes that threatened to sweep it away from the historical arena. Sensing the explosive force contained in the consistent restoration of historical truth, the Brezhnev-Suslov leadership, immediately after they had seized the levers of power, placed an unconditional taboo on any further objective “sorting out” of the historical past. Textbooks on party history were once again rewritten, and the sharpest characterizations of Stalinism that had appeared in the “thaw” period were removed. All other versions of Soviet history could henceforth only develop in Samizdat or “Tamizdat.”

The dissident movement, which developed as a negative reaction to re-Stalinization, headed entirely along an anti-communist path. This process had deep historical roots. The Stalinist terror had so widely burned out all alternative communist forces, that the very type of Bolshevik consciousness was lost in Soviet society. The development of the official ruling party showed that all the fundamental attributes of Stalinism (with the exception of the most odious of its manifestations, such as state terror) remained inviolable. The last mass, genuinely communist movement (the 1968 “Prague spring”) was crushed by Soviet intervention, carried out under the dishonest slogan of “the fight against counter-revolution.”<sup>3</sup> This tragic action contributed to the final disillusionment of most Soviet intellectuals with the very idea of communism, which, allegedly, was incapable in principle of ridding itself of the malignant features of Stalinism.



*Robert Conquest*  
(1917–2015)



*Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn*  
(1918–2008)

In these conditions, an orientation toward the capitalist West developed within the dissident movement in the USSR. For the majority of its ideologists, the fight against Stalinism in the name of restoring Bolshevik (Leninist, “Trotskyist”) principles was just as alien and hostile (although, it goes without saying, for fundamentally different reasons) as it was for the ideologists of the post-Stalinist regimes (including Titoism, Maoism, and Castroism, the “leaders” of which were raised on the ideas of “the struggle against Trotskyism”). Having made their political choice, these people were not inclined to undertake a careful scientific study and re-evaluation of post-October history. They accepted on faith and mechanically reproduced the historical versions provided by Western Sovietology during the Cold War, according to which the Stalinist regime grew naturally out of the revolutionary practice of Bolshevism.

Insofar as “Trotskyism” was hated, as it had been, both by pro-capitalist and by official communist forces, its history fell out of the sphere of objective historical research. Anti-communist historiography, politicized no less than the Stalinist school of falsification, remained under the power of its own ideological stereotypes, stubbornly lacking any desire to deal with historical facts. It is enough to say that, in Robert Conquest’s book, *The Great Terror*, from which future Soviet “democrats” learned about their nation’s history, Trotsky’s ideas and activity were dealt with in all of one page, where we counted no less than ten crude factual errors and misrepresentations. Approximately the same state of affairs can be seen in the book by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, which confirmed the old truism that the best sorts of lies are prepared from half-truths. In it, historical facts were fitted into an *a priori* scheme, according to which the Bolshevik Party from its inception was weighed down by a yearning for irrational violence, and in this sense was a “monolithic whole.” In order to shift responsibility for the mass terror from Stalin’s clique onto the entire party, the number of its victims was presented by an order of magnitude higher than it was



in reality (the stubborn concealment by the Brezhnev regime of the statistics of Stalin's repressions favored statistical manipulations of this sort, which are found in all anti-communist works). The sole function of the Stalinist terror was declared to be preventive intimidation of the people in order to guarantee their meek submission to the ruling regime. Such an interpretation was called upon to serve as support for the traditional anti-communist myth about "the Satanic nature" of the Bolsheviks, their fanatical enchantment by the "utopian" idea, and their fetishistic devotion to "party-mindedness," in the name of which any atrocities are supposedly justified. This myth lay behind opinions that the entire Bolshevik old guard blindly fulfilled Stalin's plans and fell victim in the end to senseless self-destruction. Alternative "prognoses made in hindsight" were a natural supplement to this myth. According to them, if the Left Opposition had triumphed over Stalin, the history of "communism" and of the fate of the Soviet Union would have developed in the same tragic manner.

It would seem that "perestroika," which initially consecrated itself with the slogan of "restore in today's conditions, and restore as completely as possible, the spirit of Leninism,"<sup>4</sup> should have led to the debunking of these myths. Moreover, as "perestroika" proceeded, not only the victims of the Moscow Trials of 1936–1938 were finally rehabilitated, but also the participants of the communist opposition groupings who had been thrown into prisons at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s. However, the rehabilitation reports, prepared by the Politburo commission at the end of the 1980s, not only did not clarify the history of the inner-party struggle, but rendered it more incomprehensible.



*Mikhail Sergeevich Solomentsev*  
(1913–2008)



*Aleksandr Nikolaevich Yakovlev*  
(1923–2005)

Mikhail Solomentsev initially headed the commission to further study the material connected with Stalin's repression; he was followed by Aleksandr Yakovlev. Both were typical bureaucrats "of the last Stalin call-up," who began their political careers in the 1940s. Solomentsev belonged to the

dogmatically conservative wing of Gorbachev's Politburo, and Yakovlev to its liberal bourgeois wing, at first cautiously, then more and more openly preparing the restoration of capitalist relations in the USSR. However, what they shared in common was that they had been raised in a spirit of unquestioning submission to any directive, to any last word coming from "person number one." Belonging to the generation of party careerists whose convictions went no further than the tip of their tongue, they were organically incapable of imagining how it would possible to sacrifice their bureaucratic well-being for the sake of principles. They could not imagine fighting, when confronted with the threat of not only losing their posts and privileges, but also of suffering the harshest repression. Like Khrushchev and those who echoed his thoughts, they were not comfortable in admitting that whole detachments of Bolsheviks had conducted a struggle against the all-powerful "leader," who had at his disposal a smoothly-running machine of persecution and terror.

For this reason, the historical account presented in the rehabilitation papers prepared under their guidance went little further than the version provided by Khrushchev, on the one hand, and by Conquest-Solzhenitsyn, on the other. This third version amounted to the fact that the actual "guilt" of the Bolsheviks who had been victimized in the 1930s was limited to individual private conversations, in which they had expressed dissatisfaction with Stalin and certain aspects of his policy.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. The version about Trotsky's "isolation" in the 1930s was maintained even in the later works of Roy Medvedev and Dmitry Volkogonov.

<sup>2</sup>. In this case, by "de-Stalinization" we mean the consistent exposure of Stalin's crimes and the destruction of Stalinist historical myths.

<sup>3</sup>. It is characteristic that a day before the invasion of Soviet troops into Czechoslovakia, an article in *Pravda*, that was whipping up hysteria against the new political regime in Czechoslovakia, declared that one of its main crimes was the publication in Prague of a book by Trotsky.

<sup>4</sup>. *Materialy Plenuma Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 27–28 ianvaria 1987 g.*, M., 1987, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, in further presenting the history of the inner-party groupings of the 1930s, we will use the factual material contained in these reports, but we will criticize their conclusions, since they were based on a superficial and tendentious study of the investigation material. We will verify and supplement these documents with other, more reliable, facts and evidence.

# ИЗВЕСТИЯ ЦК КПСС

ИЗДАВАЛИСЬ В 1919-29 гг.

ВОЗОБНОВЛЕНЫ В 1989 г.

Решения, материалы, документы  
высших органов КПСС

Сообщения из Комиссий  
и отделов Центрального Комитета

В Комитете партийного контроля  
при ЦК КПСС

Выборы и утверждение  
партийных работников

Международные связи партии

В Комиссии Политбюро ЦК КПСС  
по дополнительному изучению материалов,  
связанных с репрессиями, имевшими место  
в период 30—40-х и начала 50-х годов

Информация и хроника

Почта ЦК КПСС

Из архивов партии

В Комиссии Политбюро ЦК КПСС

103

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Председатель Комиссии  
Секретарь Комиссии

М. Соломенцев  
Н. Савинкин

## О ДЕЛЕ ТАК НАЗЫВАЕМОГО «СОЮЗА МАРКСИСТОВ-ЛЕНИНЦЕВ»

Постановлениями коллегии ОГПУ в 1932—1933 гг. в несудебном порядке были привлечены к уголовной ответственности с назначением различных мер наказания М. Н. Рютин, М. С. Иванов, В. Н. Каюров, Л. Б. Каменев, Г. Е. Зиновьев, П. А. Галкин, В. И. Демидов, П. П. Федоров, Г. Е. Рохкин, П. М. Замятин, Н. И. Колоколов, В. Л. Лислянская, В. Б. Горелов, А. Н. Слепков, Д. П. Марецкий, Н. И. Васильев, Б. М. Пташный, Я. Э. Стэн, П. Г. Петровский, И. С. Розенгауз, Я. В. Старосельский, Б. А. Карнаух, С. В. Токарев, М. И. Мебель, А. В. Каюров, П. А. Сильченко, И. Н. Боргиор, А. С. Зельдин, А. И. Козловский и М. Е. Равич-Черкасский.

группы Центрархива, и М. С. Иванов, член партии с 1906 г., руководитель группы Наркомата рабочекрестьянской инспекции РСФСР, обеспокоенные широко распространенными грубыми нарушениями внутрипартийной демократии, насаждением в руководстве партийными и государственными делами административно-командных методов, решили в письменной форме изложить свои взгляды на создававшуюся обстановку.

Непосредственным исполнителем этого стал М. Н. Рютин. В марте 1932 г. им были подготовлены проекты двух документов под названием «Сталин и кризис пролетарской диктатуры» и обращение «Ко всем членам ВКП(б)». В редактировании

6  
1989

*Izvestiia TsK KPSS [Information of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union], № 6, 1989, which contained an official report from the Politburo Commission chaired by M. Solomentsev, "About the Case of the So-Called 'Union of Marxist-Leninists.'"*



# 35. The Union of Marxist-Leninists

However, the history of the organization, “The Union of Marxist-Leninists,” as it was called by its participants, cut into this version like a sharp wedge. It was one thing to have Trotsky declared a solitary outcast by the supporters of “perestroika,” such as Yakovlev and Volkogonov; they thought he had lost his co-thinkers in the USSR, and was guided in his exposés of Stalinism by personal hatred for Stalin and the wounded pride of a vanquished foe. But it was quite another matter to have a group of Old Bolsheviks, who had published documents mercilessly criticizing Stalin’s regime and calling for communists to rise up in a struggle against Stalin’s clique in the name of restoring the ideals and principles of the October Revolution.

However, even here Yakovlev found a Jesuitical solution. The rehabilitation report addressing the case of the “Union” produced an account suggesting that the documents of this organization found in the archives of the OGPU were not genuine. In pursuit of this goal, the report noted that only copies made from the originals of these documents were preserved among the investigation papers. The rehabilitation report also took on faith the explanation written by Riutin with regard to a denunciation that had been made against him in 1930: “*I said not a word* about Thermidor and strikes. Here everything has been invented from beginning to end. I am not a Trotskyist or an Ustrialovets who would say such nonsense.” Guided by these words in their assessment of the “Riutin Platform” of 1932, Yakovlev’s “re-investigators” confirmed: “But it turned out there was a lot of such nonsense in this document.” Moreover, they added that in the copies of the “Platform” that had been uncovered, there were “clear borrowings from counter-revolutionary appeals and anti-Soviet leaflets, or from White emigré documents, that hardly could have corresponded to the moods of M. N. Riutin.” The report also contained a hint that these “borrowings” had been included in the “Platform” by GPU investigators, in order to give the group “the character of a gigantic conspiracy within the party and the state.” Finally, the fact that its participants had not carried out “any practical actions” to realize the views contained in its programmatic documents was declared to be grounds for rehabilitating the Riutin group.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, a year before becoming one of the leaders of a hysterical anti-communist campaign, Yakovlev had called the sharpest exposures of Stalinism contained in the “Riutin Platform” “anti-Soviet” and “counter-revolutionary.” However, the publication of its text in 1990 revealed that there was not a single word in it that could belong to the pen of one who was anti-Soviet or a White emigrant, rather than a Bolshevik.

After these preliminary considerations, let us move on to an analysis of the activity of the “Union of Marxist-Leninists” and of its programmatic documents.

The organizers of the “Union” were Martemian N. Riutin and Vasily N. Kaiurov, people with impressive Bolshevik biographies. Riutin was a party member from 1914; an active participant in the Civil War; in 1924–1928 worked as secretary of the Krasnopresnensky regional committee and



during this period supported the ruling faction in fighting against the Left Opposition; bitterly spoke against the latter at the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Party Congresses; headed a brigade of militants who broke up opposition meetings and demonstrations. At the Fifteenth Congress in 1927 he was elected candidate-member to the Central Committee. Like many other functionaries of the Moscow party organization, Riutin in 1928 sided with the “rightists.” When he was removed from party work, besides “a conciliatory attitude toward the right deviation,” he was charged with another, more serious, accusation. At a closed session of the bureau of the Krasnopresnensky regional committee, while speaking “against tendencies advocating the future removal of leading comrades from the leadership,” he had said, “We know that comrade Stalin has his own shortcomings; comrade Lenin spoke about them.” Having reported about this episode at the October 1928 Plenum of the Moscow Committee, Uglanov declared that “this should not have been said, because previously the Trotskyists were the ones who told us about this.”<sup>2</sup>



*The Riutin family in 1927, from left to right: daughter Liubov, Martemian Riutin, son Vissarion, wife Evdokiia Mikhailovna, son Vasily.*

In a speech at the plenum of the Moscow Committee, Riutin stated that he, like many other members of the bureau of the Moscow Committee, was “concerned about the unity of the leading organ of the CC,” and felt that the lower-level and regional party organizations should “exert influence on the leading comrades, so that the differences and conflicts that had arisen in their ranks could be eliminated.”<sup>3</sup>

For all these “mistakes,” Riutin escaped with a relatively light punishment. After being removed from party work in October 1928, he was appointed deputy editor of the newspaper *Krasnaia zvezda* [Red Star], and then in 1929 was sent as a plenipotentiary of the CC for collectivization in Eastern Siberia. The memorandum he presented to the Politburo after his return from this trip, which criticized the practice of collectivization, provoked a sharply negative reaction from Stalin and Kaganovich.

On 21 January 1930, Stalin published an article in *Krasnaia zvezda* entitled “Toward the Question of the Policy of Liquidating the Kulaks as a Class.” A lead article in this newspaper written by Riutin had been the cause for Stalin’s response. Calling this lead article “in general, indisputably correct,” Stalin felt that it was necessary to correct some of its “inaccurate formulations.” These inaccuracies came down to the fact that Riutin had called “the policy of liquating the kulaks as a class” a continuation of the line at the Fifteenth Congress, whereas Stalin had unequivocally (and correctly) called it “a new party policy,” a turn away from the decisions of the Fifteenth Congress.<sup>4</sup> On 2 March 1930, Riutin placed his signature for the last time on the newspaper *Krasnaia zvezda*. He was transferred from ideological to economic work by being appointed chairman of the Administration of Photo-Film Production.

At the Sixteenth Party Congress in 1930, Stalin had Kaganovich promise Riutin that he would be elected to the Central Committee if he spoke in the discussions to condemn the “right deviation,” and with “self-criticism” regarding his own “conciliatory” attitude toward it. Riutin, as he later acknowledged, “evaded” this speech. He was not elected to the Central Committee.

More serious misfortunes for Riutin began in the fall of 1930. There is evidence that in August he was invited by Stalin to Sochi, where they held discussions over two days. But already by 13 September, Stalin was writing to Molotov:

“With regard to Riutin, we must not limit ourselves to expulsion. We must, at a certain time after his expulsion, send him somewhere a bit further from Moscow. We must disarm this counter-revolutionary scum once and for all.”<sup>5</sup>

Evidently, this malicious directive was inspired by the fact that, by this time, Stalin had received agents’ reports about conversations Riutin had held with many Old Bolsheviks during his stay on vacation in Essentuki. The contents of these conversations had been recounted in a statement arriving on 20 September to the Central Committee. It was written by Aleksandr Nemov, a former colleague of Riutin’s at work in the Krasnopresnensky regional committee. Nemov reported that in conversations with him, Riutin had said that the policy advocated by the ruling nucleus of the CC headed by Stalin was fatal for the country. Riutin saw the bankruptcy of this policy in the exceptionally difficult material situation of the workers, the failure of collectivization, the financial collapse, and so forth. He felt that the basic task of the “rightists” was to “everywhere and every place spread among the workers that this trickster and card-sharper, Stalin, was a disaster and misfortune for the nation. ... When Stalin is brushed aside, then it will be easy to deal with the others.” Riutin told Nemov that in the future the rightists would have to work with the Trotskyists on the following basis: the Trotskyists, with Trotsky in the lead, would have to acknowledge the incorrectness of their economic platform,

which, according to Riutin, Stalin<sup>6</sup> had begun to implement, and the rightists would acknowledge that they had undoubtedly been wrong in their criticism of the Trotskyists for their assessment of the inner-party regime.<sup>7</sup>

Yaroslavsky and Shkiryatov acquainted Riutin with Nemov's statement and demanded that he present a written explanation of the accusations contained within it. In an explanatory note, Riutin asserted that "99 percent" of Nemov's denunciation was "the most reprehensible lie," and that the latter had crudely misrepresented his words about Stalin. Riutin wrote that he considered Stalin "the greatest leader of the party, capable of bringing Lenin's principles into effect," while his critical remarks about Stalin were of a personal character. They amounted only to the fact that Stalin "needlessly defamed me and in a cunning maneuver removed me from party work."<sup>8</sup> In a face-to-face encounter with Nemov at the Central Control Commission, Riutin repeated these assertions and refuted the terrifying accusation made by the informer — that he had wanted to "form a bloc with the Trotskyists." Understanding what arguments might be most persuasive in the eyes of the "party investigators," Riutin redirected this accusation at Nemov, calling him a concealed Trotskyist, and his statement — an attempt by the Trotskyists to settle accounts with him for his past struggle against them.<sup>9</sup>

Evidently, Riutin at that time had already clearly defined his position and viewed the "party prosecutors" not as comrades in the party, but as his potential jailers. Therefore he chose not to tell the CCC the truth of the opinions he had told to Nemov confidentially, but declared that the statements attributed to him had been invented by the informer. Only in 1932, during an interrogation by the GPU in the case of the "Union," did Riutin confess that in 1930 he "had categorically denied all of Nemov's statements ... Although, fundamentally, his report conveyed my conversations with him correctly."<sup>10</sup>

In turn, the "party prosecutors" did not believe Riutin's explanations, all the more so because they had information that Riutin had conducted similar conversations even with other Old Bolsheviks.

Three days after Nemov's denunciation had been submitted, Riutin was heard at a session of the Presidium of the Central Control Commission, which expelled him from the party "for traitorous and duplicitous behavior toward the party and for an attempt at underground propaganda of right-opportunist views."<sup>11</sup> On 5 October, this decision was confirmed by the Politburo. On 13 November, Riutin was arrested on charges of counter-revolutionary agitation. However, on 17 January 1931, the collegium of the OGPU declared that this charge was unproven, and Riutin was released from prison. After this, and right until his arrest in the case of "The Union of Marxist-Leninists," he worked as an ordinary economist.

Soon after leaving prison, Riutin decided to create an underground organization, and in the beginning of March 1932, began to write its programmatic document, "Stalin and the Crisis of Proletarian Dictatorship," which would later be called the "Riutin Platform." Already by now he had apparently come into contact with future members of the "Union" and acquainted them with his work. Klavdia A. Zamiatina-Chernykh, one of the few who were sentenced in the "Riutin affair" but

managed to survive the Stalin terror, reported in 1961 that, by May 1932, she had typed the first seven copies of Riutin's manuscript. She gave one to her husband, Pyotr M. Zamiatin, who by that time had already been expelled from the party and then endured a three-month arrest.<sup>12</sup>

Written at the same time as the "Platform" was the "Appeal to All Members of the VKP(b)," which was a short presentation of the basic ideas of the "Platform," and was later called a "Manifesto." Already by June 1932, the "Manifesto" was being distributed in Kharkov, and in August of the same year, the secret-political department of the OGPU had received reports from its agents that a group of Kharkov Trotskyists, who were in touch with Moscow Trotskyists, were discussing the appeal "To All Members of the Party."

The "Union of Marxist-Leninists" was formed on 21 August at an organizational meeting in which, besides Riutin, fourteen communists from Moscow and Kharkov participated. As Riutin said in testimony at the investigation, each of those present at this meeting, or at least the majority of them, "had behind them co-thinkers whose views they ... expressed."<sup>13</sup> The meeting's participants took the documents presented by Riutin as a basic draft, and handed them over for final editing to an elected five-person committee. Riutin himself did not join this committee, since he was not a party member, and also for conspiratorial reasons (after his release from prison he had been under continuous surveillance).

Those elected to the committee were Vasily N. Kaiurov, Mikhail S. Ivanov, Pavel A. Galkin, Vasily I. Demidov and Pavel P. Fyodorov. Among them, the leading role belonged to Kaiurov, an old worker-revolutionary and member of the party since 1900. In the July days of 1917, Kaiurov sheltered Lenin, and after the victory of the October Revolution, carried out important assignments from him. Lenin characterized Kaiurov as his "old acquaintance, a well-known Petersburg worker," and in 1918 proposed to send to the front "several dozen Petersburg worker 'leaders' (à la Kaiurov)."<sup>14</sup> After publication of his 1923 article, "How We Must Reorganize Rabkrin," which discusses the need to draw workers more widely into management, Lenin asked Krupskaya how Kaiurov had reacted to the article. Until 1932, Kaiurov engaged in state and economic work, and often published articles on historical and party topics.

During the investigation of the "Riutin Affair," Kaiurov assumed main responsibility for creating the illegal group. Even from exile, he sent a letter on 1 August 1933 to the CC and CCC, in which he declared again that he considered himself the "main culprit" in organizing the group, insofar as he belonged to "the category of Old Bolsheviks whose authority inspired younger party members, whose opinions coincided with my own; I consider these to be: Riutin, Galkin, Ivanov and Aleksandr Kaiurov (the son of V. N. Kaiurov – *V. R.*)".<sup>15</sup>

In turn, Riutin did everything possible during interrogations to take the main blame on himself for the activity of the "Union of Marxist-Leninists." He declared that he had already arrived at the decision to begin a struggle against Stalin in May 1928, and stated that "there were no people inspiring me then, nor is there anyone now. I myself was the inspirer of the organization, I headed it, I



alone wrote the entire platform and the appeal. The editing of the platform and appeal was, of course, a collective effort, but it made no major changes in either document.”<sup>16</sup>

In Soviet historical literature, the question is debated about whether the “Platform” and “Manifesto” belong to the pen of Riutin alone, or if these documents represent the product of the collective thought and creativity of people who, according to the conclusions of the investigation, had just become familiar with these documents. Testimony obtained during investigation of the authorship of these documents is very contradictory. Riutin testified that he “edited” both documents himself, along with Ivanov and partially with Kaiurov. However Ivanov, to whom the investigators, of course, did not show Riutin’s testimony, said that Kaiurov had discussed the document with participants in the former “Workers’ Opposition,” who had made “quite a few corrections and additions.” Riutin had then agreed with the majority of them. Ivanov also said that he himself had handed “the large and small documents” to Rokkhin and Sten; they were given to the latter, moreover, so that he would acquaint Zinoviev and Kamenev with them. Finally, Ivanov mentioned comments from Sten, Uglanov and the Kharkov Trotskyists, who “might have influenced the document ... in its final round of editing,” and that toward the end of the “editing,” comments were considered from Trotskyists, rightists, the “Workers’ Opposition,” Zinovievists and Sten.<sup>17</sup> At a session of the Presidium of the Central Control Commission devoted to investigating the “Riutin affair,” Yaroslavsky directly rebuked Kamenev for receiving a “counter-revolutionary proclamation”<sup>18</sup> from Sten, having the “Riutin Platform” in mind.

Then Grigory Rokkhin, a former professor at the Institute of Red Professors, who had been expelled from the party at the end of 1931 as a “Trotskyist contrabandist,” testified that Ivanov had told him about the creation of a new opposition group. It consisted of Old Bolsheviks striving to unify all “groups in the party and all oppositions” to develop an active struggle against the leadership of the party, and it would take the form of an active protest of all leaders of the opposition against Stalin.<sup>19</sup>

Several other works based on a study of the investigation files of not only the Riutin group, but other opposition groups as well, indicate that several members of the former “Bukharin school,” as well as Zinoviev and Kamenev, participated in the writing of the “Riutin Platform,” or at least in making additions and corrections.<sup>20</sup> The dissemination and discussion of the documents of the “Union” was accompanied by a discussion of plans to change the party leadership. Zinoviev had already been sentenced in the trial of the “Moscow Center” in January 1935; in a letter sent to the party leadership from prison on 13 January, he reported that in the course of such discussions (obviously within his group) there was talk of restoring “Lenin’s Politburo,” i.e., the Politburo made up of the members who had been there under Lenin: Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky. The Riutin group, according to Zinoviev, “scolded me and Kamenev, placed their bets on new people, on their own ‘practical people,’ but also, in the end, did not remove these ‘nominations.’”<sup>21</sup>

It is also known that A. Slepkov, D. Maretsky and P. Petrovsky had been drawn into the case of the “Union of Marxist-Leninists.” They met in August 1932 with Riutin and worked with him on the

“Platform.”<sup>22</sup> The basic positions of the “Platform” were discussed at a conference of “rightists” that took place at the end of August or beginning of September. At a session of the Presidium of the CCC examining the “Riutin Affair,” Yaroslavsky declared that Slepkov, in his own words, managed “to seduce 100 people to come over to our views.”<sup>23</sup>

It seems to me that the “reworking,” “refinements” and “additions” by a number of leading party theoreticians introduced much that was new to the “Riutin Platform.” This document’s theoretical level was much higher than Riutin’s polemical articles and pamphlets published in the 1920s, which in spirit and style did not differ from similar works written by other party “practical workers,” or “mid-level figures” who belonged at that time to the ruling faction. The “Riutin Platform” displays a profound understanding of the problems of the party’s history and policy; it contains a whole number of serious generalizations concerning the influence of Stalinism on the economy, social relations, the political system, ideology, and the international communist movement. This document reveals a deep familiarity with events in the party and the nation that were carefully concealed by the party higher-ups. It is hardly the case that such detailed information about these events could have been known to Riutin, who for the two preceding years had been cut off from active participation in political life.

In addition, when it comes to its theoretical level, the “Riutin Platform” is inferior to the works of not only Trotsky, but also the works of other figures of the Left Opposition published in the *Bulletin*. In the “Platform,” emotions and an abundance of abusive characterizations sometimes outweigh the strict logic of argumentation.

It would not be out of place to note that the “Platform” shows the familiarity of its authors with Trotsky’s works written in exile, and it testifies to their profound rethinking of the lessons of the inner-party struggle in the 1920s. In it one even encounters the rephrasing of various vivid expressions from Trotsky that were well known to communists since the time of this struggle, for instance, “a muzzle has been placed on the whole nation” (Trotsky’s phrase: “Do you actually want to put a muzzle on the party?”).

In previous sections of this book, several concrete statements and judgments contained in the “Riutin Platform” have been introduced. Now we will attempt to analyze the basic principles and ideas of this document.

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1. *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 97.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

3. *Ibid.*

4. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia* [Stalin, *Works*], vol. 12, pp. 178–183.

5. *Kommunist*, 1990, № 11, p. 104.

6. This idea was formulated in the “Riutin Platform,” as we will see later, in a significantly less categorical and more flexible way.

7. Martem’ian Riutin, *Na koleni ne vstanu* [I Won’t Get on My Knees], pp. 317–318.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 319–320.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 329.

- [10.](#) Ibid., p. 278.
- [11.](#) Ibid., p. 25.
- [12.](#) Ibid., pp. 262–263, 284.
- [13.](#) Ibid., p. 28.
- [14.](#) V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, [Complete Collected Works] vol. 36, p. 521; vol. 50, p. 124.
- [15.](#) Riutin, *Na koleni ne vstanu*, p. 286.
- [16.](#) Ibid., pp. 280–281.
- [17.](#) Ibid., p. 289.
- [18.](#) Ibid., p. 298.
- [19.](#) Ibid., p. 31.
- [20.](#) *Oni ne molchali* [They Were Not Silent], M., 1991, pp. 166, 171, 193.
- [21.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989, № 7, p. 76.
- [22.](#) *Oni ne molchali*, p. 179.
- [23.](#) Riutin, *Na koleni ne vstanu*, p. 36.

## 36. “The Riutin Platform”

The work, “Stalin and the Crisis of Proletarian Dictatorship,” opened with a section on “‘Contingency’ and the Role of the Individual in History.” Citing Marx’s words about the role of historical accidents, including “even such an ‘accident’ as the character of the people who initially headed the movement,”<sup>1</sup> the authors of this work emphasized that “in conditions of proletarian dictatorship, which has concentrated in its hands all the levers of the economy, controlled by an apparatus that is ten times more powerful and all-embracing than the apparatus of any bourgeois state; in conditions of the unlimited rule of one party in the country and of the gigantic centralization of the entire party leadership,” such an accident as the character of the general secretary heading the party has assumed a truly fatal role.<sup>2</sup>

Referring to the characterisation of Stalin in Lenin’s “Testament,” the authors of the “Platform” noted that when he commented on it, Stalin himself usually reduced everything to his rudeness, diverting attention from his other negative traits which had assumed enormous political significance. This primarily had to do with the insufficient loyalty that had been noted by Lenin, i.e., his political honesty and decency. Meanwhile it was precisely this feature that had become a defining trait in Stalin’s character after Lenin’s death. Stalin had cast aside devotion and loyalty to the interests of the party, by subordinating all his actions to the interests of his own ambition and lust for power.

### **СТАЛИН И КРИЗИС ПРОЛЕТАРСКОЙ ДИКТАТУРЫ <sup>1</sup>**

#### **ПЛАТФОРМА**

#### **«СОЮЗА МАРКСИСТОВ-ЛЕНИНЦЕВ»**

#### **(«ГРУППА РЮТИНА»)\***

#### **1. «СЛУЧАЙНОСТЬ» И РОЛЬ ЛИЧНОСТИ В ИСТОРИИ.**

Маркс в своем письме к Кугельману говорит: «История имела бы очень мистический характер, если бы «случайности» не играли никакой роли. Эти случайности входят, конечно, сами составной частью в общий ход развития, уравниваясь другими случайностями. Но ускорение и замедление в сильной степени зависит от этих случайностей, среди которых фигурирует также и такой «случай», как характер людей, стоящих в начале во главе движения» <sup>2</sup>.

В наших условиях такая случайность, как характер человека, стоящего во главе движения, во главе партии и рабочего класса,— характер Сталина, играет поистине роковую роль. В условиях про-



Another one of Stalin's negative qualities noted by Lenin — intolerance toward the opinions of others — in combination with disloyalty, had led to the following situation: "He didn't tolerate people around him who had an independent opinion on party matters, or people who stood higher than him intellectually, ideologically, or theoretically. Using the party apparatus and the GPU, he threw them out of leading posts, slandered them, exaggerated their earlier mistakes and 'invented' dozens of new ones, thereby deceiving the party." In place of the party leaders he had discredited, Stalin appointed people who were "limited theoretically, ignorant and unprincipled, but who were obedient and submissive lackeys and flatterers..."<sup>3</sup>

The authors of the "Platform" gave an extremely negative characterization, not only of Stalin, but of his closest circle, which they called "Stalin's clique." They applied this term primarily to the entire Politburo of that time, including people with a tragic fate in the future (Kirov, Ordzhonikidze), and people who fell beneath the steamroller of repression in 1937–1938 (Kosior, Chubar, Rudzutak). Moreover, in two places the platform contained particularly negative descriptions of Kirov, not only for his devotion to Stalin, but for his former membership in the Constitutional Democratic Party.



*Sitting: Ordzhonikidze, Stalin, Molotov, Kirov*

*Standing: Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Kuibyshev*

Differentiating the personality and political conduct of these people is a matter for the future. Only a careful examination of archival materials can show whether their position at the beginning of the 1930s differed from that of the remaining members of the Politburo (Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Andreev and others), who not only survived the terror of 1937–1938, but became its active organizers. In any case, characterizing Stalin's circle of those years as a unified clique

deserves serious attention, since the authors of the “Platform,” as follows from its entire text, were very familiar with the events occurring in the party’s upper echelons.

The “Platform” noted that Stalin, while relying on the support of his clique, began to act cautiously at first, and then more boldly, as he cast aside the mask of a “modest” Old Bolshevik whom the party had “forced” to bear “the heavy burden of general secretary.” He was ever more openly displaying a striving for personal dictatorship. In his struggle against various oppositions, he kept asserting that he was fighting for a collective leadership, but at the same time, he was preparing a “bloodless” Eighteenth Brumaire, slicing off from the party one group of its leaders after another.

“If, at the time of the coup d’état of Louis Bonaparte, the population of Paris heard the roar of cannons for a few days, then at the time of the coup d’état of Iosif Stalin, the party has been hearing a ‘barrage’ of slander and deception for several years. Like Louis Bonaparte, Stalin has achieved results: the coup has been completed, and the most barefaced and deceptive personal dictatorship has been established.”<sup>4</sup>

And here, one cannot deny the accuracy of the “Riutin Platform’s” political diagnosis. The establishment of Stalin’s Bonapartist dictatorship truly was accomplished by means of political provocation and deception of the party, and not by bloody reprisals against communists. Such reprisals, it is true, were later needed, on a scale unprecedented in history, to solidify this dictatorship in a struggle against the resistance to it in the ranks of the party.

As the “Platform” justifiably stressed, in contrast to Lenin, who was a leader but not a dictator, Stalin was a dictator but not a leader. The difference between a leader and a dictator is this: a genuine leader of the people rests on the trust and support of the masses; a dictator, however, “usually comes to power either through crushing a revolution, or after the wave of revolution has receded, or through inner combinations of the ruling clique, or through a palace coup, relying on the state or party apparatus, the army and the police.”<sup>5</sup> All modern dictators came to power in these ways: Mussolini, Piłsudski, Horthy, Chiang Kai-shek and others. (Let us recall, that the epoch of the 1920s and 1930s was a time of dictatorial regimes not only in Asia, but in nearly half of the countries of bourgeois Europe).

Stalin’s dictatorship was consolidated in a similar way, although it differed from other dictatorial regimes in that it grew on the foundations of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and facilitated its distortion and degeneration.

Every dictator deceives the masses and therefore needs the justification and glorification of his rule; he needs canonization (i.e., what would be called the personality cult after Stalin’s death). Noting that the activity around the canonizing of Stalin had assumed grandiose dimensions, the “Platform” pointed out that “the theoretical articles in journals have simply turned into applications for promotion and signed statements of loyalty to Stalin.”<sup>6</sup> The party apparatus, the careerists and flatterers surrounding Stalin, placed his name next to the names of Marx, Engels and Lenin, thereby crossing “all boundaries of baseness” and making a mockery of historical truth.

In exposing the falsified accounts of Stalin’s activity, the authors of the “Platform” described in detail his many political mistakes, starting from his semi-Menshevik position after the February

Revolution, and ending with his opportunist policy in the period of the Chinese Revolution in 1926–1927. Stalin had turned the Chinese Communist Party “into an appendage or a tail of the Kuomintang,” and then had placed blame for this on the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, which, “even in trivial matters at that time was blindly following the directives of the Comintern, where Stalin was playing the role of first fiddle.”<sup>7</sup> In this part of the work, the historical analysis and evaluation of Stalin fully coincide with the positions in Trotsky’s book, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, which came out in 1932, in Berlin.

Passing on to an evaluation of Stalin as a theoretician, the “Platform” noted that his entire theoretical activity in the pre-revolutionary period comes down to the writing of the article, “Marxism and the National Question,” which is a mediocre composition presenting Lenin’s ideas. The same imprint of mediocrity, schematism, narrow-mindedness, and poor erudition lies on all his subsequent works. Over the last four to five years, Stalin had “broken all records of political hypocrisy and unprincipled political intrigue.”<sup>8</sup> As confirmation of this claim, many examples were provided where Stalin changed his political principles and assessments for the sake of justifying the zigzags of his own policy.

The authors of the “Platform” dwelt in considerable detail with the vulgarization by Stalin of the struggle against opportunism, which he turned into an instrument for defending his own views and into a scourge for frightening and urging on the party masses in conducting his political campaigns. Along with this, Stalin’s regime had become favorable ground for developing the most characteristic trait of opportunism: an unprincipled adaptation to ruling policy. Stalin’s policy, “using terror to force everyone to recognize it as Leninist policy; forcing all to repent daily for their mistakes and, under threat, to change their views several times depending on the demands of the boss — such policy made opportunists even out of genuine Bolshevik-Leninists.”<sup>9</sup>

The change by party members of their convictions, depending on the demands of the ruling clique, was guaranteed by the fact that the entire press was at Stalin’s personal disposal, and no one dared publicly to express opinions contradicting the official ones. Replacing the “force of proof” with the “proof of force” proceeded during furious ideological campaigns, in which an unlimited quantity of articles in newspapers and journals, thousands of brochures and books, all repeating one and the same thing, served to pass off obvious political skullduggery for the truth. “A mistaken judgment, if it is expressed simply, will not deceive even a child. If, however, it is developed in several volumes or hundreds of articles, if it is distributed in the course of several years in tens of millions of books and pamphlets, then it can confuse millions of people among the masses who are weakly developed politically.”<sup>10</sup> Such was the purpose of Stalin’s sophistry, as he “concocted in his kitchen every kind of deviation, excess, leap, degeneration and so forth to justify his filthy deeds.”<sup>11</sup>

The most dangerous example of Stalin’s distortion of Marxist theory named in the “Platform,” was his “theory” of the inevitable intensification of the class struggle as the advance toward socialism proceeded. The authors of the “Platform” felt that this theory parasitized the real contradiction between the proletarian state and the kulaks. Given correct party policy; given a genuine turn of the

middle peasant toward socialism; given the material uplifting of the poor peasant and middle-peasant masses, this contradiction would not have required a resolution through violent means, since the economic base of the kulaks would then have been undermined, and politically they would have been isolated. As a result, the law that would have become operative was the direct opposite of Stalin's; the resistance of capitalist elements would have weakened, and the class struggle would have eased.

Stalin, however, established a “law,” according to which the resistance of capitalist elements must inevitably grow during the entire extent of the transition period and even in socialist society itself; and the initial stages of that society, according to him, already existed in the USSR. This declaration found an echo in the resolution of the Seventeenth Conference in 1932, which indicated that in the second Five-Year Plan, capitalist classes and even classes in general would be eliminated, but nevertheless, the class struggle “at various moments” would inevitably sharpen.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, the “Platform” stressed that a gigantic sharpening of the class struggle was actually taking place in the Soviet Union. In the previous three years, the country was boiling over with peasant uprisings, and its enormous regions were in a state of permanent civil war. In addition:

“Here and there, despite unbelievable terror being used against the working class, strikes were flaring up; the hunger and poverty of the masses had become horrifying; masses of party members, workers and basic layers of the countryside were burning with indignation and hatred toward Stalin and his clique.”<sup>13</sup>

Concerning another key slogan promoted by Stalin — “liquidation of the kulaks as a class” — the “Platform” noted that genuine kulaks had already disappeared during the implementation of extraordinary measures, when the overwhelming mass of the kulaks had liquidated their farms and fled to the cities. The slogan of “liquidating the kulaks as a class,” proclaimed at the end of 1929, in fact turned out to be directed against the middle peasants and poor peasants. The constant expansion of the circle of those considered kulaks led to a situation where, in several regions, toward the beginning of 1932, the segment of the dekulakized peasants constituted 30–35 percent of the rural population. The overall number of those subjected between 1928 and 1932 to one or another form of repression (dekulakization, arrests, shooting, exile, hard production quotas, individual taxation, etc.) reached no less than 40–50 percent of the entire rural population of the country.

Beginning with 1930, the struggle in the countryside was no longer against the kulaks, but against the middle and poor peasants, who made up the majority of the prisoners in “kulak” concentration camps and of those exiled to distant regions of the country; they became “the main object of executions and every kind of punitive expeditions that even used artillery and aircraft.”<sup>14</sup>

The “Platform” emphasized that the slogan of “liquidating the kulaks as a class” was anti-Leninist, even in that part which was aimed at actual kulaks. A genuinely Leninist way of liquidating the kulaks assumed the voluntary collectivization of the countryside and “trimming” the kulak to the level of the middle peasant by means of taxes (and when necessary, by directly banning the use of hired labor). “After a certain period, such a former kulak, who has become a middle peasant, given that he has a loyal attitude toward Soviet power and to socialist construction, should naturally be accepted without



hindrance into the collective farms.”<sup>15</sup> In contrast to this path, Stalin reduced the “liquidation of the kulaks as a class” to their complete expropriation and physical extermination.

The slogan of liquidating the kulaks as a class was groundless and adventuristic for another reason: it was based on a false premise about the turn of the main mass of the peasants to the kolkhozes. In reality, the kolkhozes, which were created on the basis of ferocious administrative compulsion, “over and over again are failing at a rate of tens of thousands per month, and if they do hold up, then it is because of extreme clamping down, threats and the fact that these collective farmers have nowhere ‘to move to.’”<sup>16</sup>

The “Platform” summarized: Stalin’s “theory” about the inevitable sharpening of the class struggle as a result of the successes of socialist construction, and the slogan deduced from it of “liquidating the kulaks as a class,” served as a cover for the fact that the main mass of the population in the countryside was in a state of ruthless and brutal struggle against Stalin’s policy of forced collectivization.

In light of the historical lessons of recent years, the “Platform” made an evaluation of the preceding inner-party struggle. Its corresponding section is marked by serious contradictions in characterizing the two basic political forces that opposed Stalinism. These contradictions, in my view, are evidence that several points made in the “Platform” are the result of a political compromise between representatives of various anti-Stalin groupings.

In characterizing the Left Opposition, the position advocated by the “rightists” was retained; it claimed that the economic program of the Left Opposition in the 1920s was mistaken, and that Stalin had allegedly begun to implement it in 1928. While making this claim, however, the “Platform” contained important qualifications. Stalin “had brought the economic platform of the Trotskyists to an absurdity,” and “L. D. Trotsky and the Trotskyists, one may assume, would have been more honest and devoted to the cause of proletarian revolution: they would have been able to notice their ‘controversial’ mistakes in time and make an abrupt about-face.”<sup>17</sup>

A fundamentally different assessment was made of the Left Opposition’s views of the inner-party regime and Stalin’s role.

“In contrast, in this decisive question that is extremely important for the fate of the proletarian revolution, Trotsky and the Trotskyists basically turned out to be correct. Trotsky saw earlier than others the processes within the party which had already begun to develop in 1923. Earlier than others, Trotsky also saw Stalin’s yearning to consolidate his personal dictatorship in the party.”<sup>18</sup>

Trotsky’s prognosis was also fully justified when he warned about the degeneration of the party, if the inner-party regime that had developed by 1923 was maintained.

“This timely and correct Leninist exposure of the germs of the party’s degeneration that had imperceptibly begun, and Trotsky’s passionate attempt to return the party to the path of inner-party democracy and healthy democratic centralism, constitute Trotsky’s enormously historical and revolutionary achievement, which neither slander nor any of his past mistakes can take away from him.”<sup>19</sup>

Just as contradictory as the evaluation of “Trotskyist” ideology was the characterization of Trotsky’s personality:

“Not a genius, but only a major talent, educated in a European and universal manner; a brilliant, sharp, but superficial intellect; not a profound theoretician, but only incomparable in his style, the leading publicist in all worldwide Marxist literature, given to beautiful imagery and vivid revolutionary phrases, replacing at times concrete and sober analysis; iron will, passing at times, however, into obstinacy; a major, outstanding individuality; a remarkable organizer, world tribune, sincerely and deeply devoted to the cause of communism, — such is Trotsky as a leader.”<sup>20</sup>

The striking internal contradictions of this extensive characterization (it is difficult to understand, for instance, how a “superficial intellect” could prove to be the “leading publicist in all worldwide Marxist literature,” and a “world tribune”), in my view, is explained by the fact that the “Riutin Platform” was mainly created by people who had actively participated in the past in slandering Trotsky and wanted at least partially to justify their previous position.

This part of the “Riutin Platform” ended with an unequivocal and emotional statement:

“Despite all the efforts of the many Emelian Ilovaiskys<sup>21</sup> to strike Trotsky’s name from the history of the October Revolution, he will always remain its first leader and tribune after Lenin, its standard-bearer, its creator and organizer! The triumph of the proletarian revolution, its unprecedented upsurge, and its best heroic period will always be linked to the names of Lenin and Trotsky. In the best case, the name of Stalin will be linked to the years of the proletarian revolution’s hard times, the years of gloomy reaction, and the years of the greatest defamation of the teachings of Marx and Lenin.”<sup>22</sup>

The “Riutin Platform” assessed the declaration that “Trotskyism” is the vanguard of the international counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie as the deliberately malicious lie of a “hopelessly brazen dictator,” concocted in response to the “sharply castigating articles by L. D. Trotsky,” in which the latter “reveals Stalin’s true face.”<sup>23</sup>

In moving on to a characterization of Bukharin, the “Platform” highly valued his role as a Marxist theoretician and asserted at the same time that Bukharin as a political leader “turned out to be beneath any criticism. An intelligent, but not far-sighted person; honest, but lacking character; quickly falling into panic, bewilderment and prostration; incapable of a serious and prolonged political struggle against serious political opponents; easily giving way to fear; sometimes carried away by the masses, and at other times disillusioned with them; unable to organize the party masses and lead them, but, on the contrary, needing continuous and vigilant guidance himself on the part of others — such is Bukharin as a political leader.”<sup>24</sup> The correctness of this psychological characterization is confirmed not only by Bukharin’s political conduct in the years preceding the writing of the “Platform,” but to an even greater extent by his conduct between 1933 and 1937, which represent the most lamentable pages in his biography.

On the whole, the “Riutin Platform” described with great precision the dividing lines within the old party guard, and its political fate in 1932:

“One of its segments is in prisons and exile; another, having capitulated, has become demoralized and humiliated, and drags out a miserable existence in the ranks of the party; a third group has completely degenerated and turned into the loyal servants of the ‘leader’-dictator.”<sup>25</sup>

The “Platform” correctly noted that, in the end, the majority of Stalin’s ideological opponents accepted the Jesuitical devices he thrust upon them.

“The history of the ‘self-criticism’ made by Bukharin, Rykov, Tomskey, Uglanov, Syrtsov, Lominadze, Riutin, Deborin, Sten and even Yaroslavsky taught party members rather well how to understand the nature and mechanics of this self-criticism. All who

avoided a ‘critique’ of these people, or who spoke out against similar methods of ‘self-criticism,’ have been removed from their posts, expelled from the party, and subjected to unprecedented persecution. In contrast, all who have shown enthusiasm in carrying out such ‘self-criticism’ have been promoted in their work.”<sup>[26](#)</sup>

As the “Platform” emphasized, it was precisely now, “when Stalin, to the accompaniment of cries about the victory of socialism, is plunging a knife in the back of proletarian revolution, more than any other time, the direct obligation of all honest and genuine leaders of the party is not despicable groveling before Stalin and deception of the masses — which is what Bukharin and Radek are doing — or even remaining silent, — which is what Rykov, Tomsy, Uglanov and former leaders of the Trotskyist opposition are doing — but a new and courageous struggle, not halting before expulsion from the Central Committee, before expulsion from the party, and even before the prospect of exile.”<sup>[27](#)</sup>

The “Platform” dismissed as illusory the idea that the struggle against Stalin’s clique could be headed by leaders of the former oppositions. The majority of these people are “only exhaust vapor.”<sup>[28](#)</sup> They hate Stalin with every fiber of their souls, and if a successful struggle develops against him, they will join it. But until such a turn of events, they will continue to cringe before Stalin. Therefore one must count on new leaders and organizers of the masses, who inevitably will be thrust forward in the course of the struggle to overthrow Stalin’s dictatorship.

In the course of discussing the “Platform,” this idea was defended primarily by Riutin himself, who was quite skeptical of the proposal from his comrades to bring former leaders of the oppositions into the activity of the “Union.” While being interrogated by the GPU, Riutin said:

“I felt that the leaders of both the former Trotskyist and former rightist and Zinoviev oppositions were so demoralized, had fallen so deeply into intellectual and ideological prostration, that, at the present stage of the inner-party situation, they were not capable of ... active struggle against today’s party leadership. I felt that they would take part only when they were confronted with the existence of rather widely developed underground work, which would open up certain prospects and create certain chances for success.”<sup>[29](#)</sup>

The “Platform” contained an appeal to unite all opposition forces in the party, who must cast aside previous factional disagreements that were keeping them apart.

“The old groupings and factional formations at the present time have grown hopelessly outdated, outlived themselves and have faded before a new decisive line of demarcation — for the proletarian dictatorship and a Leninist VKP(b), or for Stalin and the destruction of all the gains of the working class and its party.”<sup>[30](#)</sup>

The “Platform” pointed out that the tragic experience of recent years demanded a review of several conceptions that had always existed among Marxists. This experience showed that, after a victorious socialist revolution, opportunist and adventuristic mistakes of the ruling party could devastate the cause of socialism and throw all historical development backward by decades. Utilizing these mistakes, the international bourgeoisie, by conducting an intelligent policy from the standpoint of its class interests, could, for an extended period of time, strengthen the capitalist system.

The experience of the Russian Revolution introduced much that was new into the conception of the role of the party leadership and its influence on the fate of the victorious revolution. This experience showed “something absolutely unforeseen and unexpected. ... We had fused with, we had become

accustomed to, the idea that under the proletarian dictatorship, the leadership of the party and the country would always express the will of the masses. In fact, however, it turned out that this leadership degenerated in the course of the inner-party struggle into a personal dictatorship, fatal to Soviet power and the party, hated by the masses, and relying mainly on terror and provocation.”<sup>31</sup>

Historical experience had convincingly shown that “Leninism and the proletarian revolution could not be crushed by the enemy for long — after each defeat they would rise up with new force that was ten times more powerful.”<sup>32</sup> But the same experience revealed that immeasurably greater dangers to the fate of the revolution might arise within the revolutionary movement, if its leadership turned out to be in the hands of adventurists and provocateurs. “No matter how monstrous, no matter how paradoxical it might seem at first glance, the main enemy of Leninism, the proletarian dictatorship and socialist construction resides at the given moment in our own ranks, and even stands at the head of the party.”<sup>33</sup> Seeming to repeat Trotsky’s thesis about Stalin as the grave-digger of the October Revolution, the “Platform” confirmed that no open enemy of the revolution could better carry out the work of destroying its gains than Stalin was doing. The continuation of his rule would mean “the most horrific murder (of the revolutionary cause – *V. R.*) that has ever been seen in history!”<sup>34</sup>

One of the conditions for the existence of Stalin’s dictatorship was his political mimicry, the preservation of the superficial inviolability of Bolshevik formulas that were attractive for the masses.

“Stalin is killing Leninism under the flag of Leninism, the proletarian revolution under the flag of proletarian revolution, and socialist construction under the flag of socialist construction!”<sup>35</sup>

Stalin’s dictatorship was maintained on two foundations: social demagogy and a regime of “unprecedented terror and colossal espionage, carried out through an exceptionally centralized apparatus that also had many branches, concentrating in its hands all the material resources of the country and placing the physical existence of tens of millions of people in direct dependence on itself.”<sup>36</sup> This apparatus, terrorizing the masses, and, at the same time, itself living under a Damocles’ sword of terror, had turned into a machine that was forced to accomplish its movements according to the will of the chief “mechanic.”

In determining the ways out of the all-embracing crisis that had gripped the country, the “Platform” proceeded from the fact that the removal of Stalin and his clique through normal democratic methods, guaranteed by Party Statutes and the Soviet Constitution, was absolutely excluded. “It would be unforgivable childishness to comfort oneself with illusions that this clique, which has usurped the rights of the party and working class through deception and slander, could voluntarily give them back.” In order to save the cause of communism, it was necessary “*to remove this clique by force.*”<sup>37</sup>

Thus, the “Riutin Platform” essentially promoted the idea of a political revolution. Trotsky, who still felt at that time that the path of party reform was possible, arrived at this idea only a few months later.

Proceeding from the view that there were objective conditions within the country for such a political revolution, the “Platform” rejected arguments that the Stalin regime rested on a mass social base. It confirmed that the majority of party members, and to an even greater degree the non-party



manual and white-collar workers, were opposed to Stalin's policy. In the countryside, Stalin's course not only lacked supporters, but even people who were neutral toward it. "The entire countryside has been led to despair and is boiling with indignation. The unceasing mass uprisings in the villages are the best indicator of their political moods."<sup>38</sup>

Even the party apparatus was largely hypocritical and did not believe in the success of Stalin's adventuristic policy. "At the present time, almost any party philistine, narrow-minded person and even party official is discontented and whines about what is happening in the party and the country."<sup>39</sup>

Stalin cultivated views in every way possible that his removal would lead to the overthrow of Soviet power. They served as an obstacle to shifting from helpless whining to political struggle, but there were definite objective grounds for views of this kind. As a result of the implementation of Stalin's policy, anti-Soviet moods had grown in the country ten times over. Many workers in the cities and countryside, who in the past had been devoted to the Soviet regime, had been thrown "by Stalin's criminal policy into the camp of counter-revolution."<sup>40</sup> Therefore, a political revolution directed at liquidating Stalin's dictatorship was tied to the risk of activating forces hostile to Soviet power, and, consequently, to the danger of counter-revolutionary restoration.

However, the authors of the "Platform" considered the dangers associated with maintaining the rule of Stalin's clique to be immeasurably more serious than the dangers associated with the possible unleashing of openly counter-revolutionary forces who, "to our good fortune ... are scattered, divided and disorganized."<sup>41</sup> Describing the tasks of communists in this context, they resorted to the following graphic comparison:

"The party is in the situation of passengers in an automobile, whose driver suddenly goes completely out of his mind, turns off the road and leads the passengers over bumps and potholes, heading at full speed straight into a ravine." In addition, he "attacks the passengers as opportunists, 'deviators,' and calms them with assurances that all of this simply amounts to the inevitable difficulties in traveling by automobile. In such a situation, it would be stupid and absurd for the passengers to wait until the 'driver' runs them into the ditch. They must try at full tilt to tear the driver away from the wheel, place someone on the fly behind the wheel who can drive the car and return it to the beaten tracks. There is no other escape for the passengers."<sup>42</sup>

The "Platform" warned that the struggle against Stalin's clique would require gigantic effort and sacrifices, for Stalin would not hesitate to bring down his entire repressive apparatus on people who were fighting for his removal. Even if this fight were successful, "many, many years will be needed to pull the party and the country from the unprecedented quagmire into which Stalin has led them."<sup>43</sup>

The positive program formulated in the "Platform" basically coincided with the program of the Left Opposition. As the first measures to be taken in the political sphere, the "Platform" called for the convening of an extraordinary party congress; the removal of the heads of the party apparatus and the scheduling of new elections to party bodies on the basis of inner-party democracy; the creation of firm organizational guarantees against usurping the rights of the party by the party apparatus; new elections to the Soviets with a critical elimination of the system of appointments; the introduction of the strictest revolutionary legality and a thorough purge of the GPU apparatus.

The basic measures in the realm of socio-economic policy were as follows: ending the policy of dekulakization and disbanding all the collective farms created by force; the conduct of truly voluntary collectivization and support of individual poor-peasant and middle-peasant farms; halting the procurement of agricultural products by methods of robbing the countryside; halting the export for minimal prices of agricultural products; an immediate halt to playing with tempos due to direct and indirect, open and concealed taxes that are impossible to pay; and a halt to other ways of robbing the workers.

As we can see, the “Riutin Platform” included a completely realistic program for the socialist rebirth of Soviet society. Only one powerful factor was a barrier to its realization: a sharp intensification of terror on the part of Stalin and his clique.

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- [1.](#) K. Marx, F. Engels, *Sochineniia*, vol. 33, p. 175 [MECW, vol. 44, p. 137].
  - [2.](#) *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 34.
  - [3.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 335.
  - [4.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 337.
  - [5.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 351.
  - [6.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 352.
  - [7.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 355.
  - [8.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 337.
  - [9.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 363.
  - [10.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 348.
  - [11.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 349.
  - [12.](#) *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh* [The CPSU in Resolutions and Decrees], vol. 5, p. 397.
  - [13.](#) *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 375.
  - [14.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 376.
  - [15.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 379.
  - [16.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 378.
  - [17.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 385.
  - [18.](#) *Ibid.*
  - [19.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 386.
  - [20.](#) *Ibid.*
  - [21.](#) This ironic nickname (taken from the name of Ilovaisky, historian and publicist oriented toward the nobility and conservatism), found in other sections of the “Riutin Platform,” refers to Emelian Yaroslavsky.
  - [22.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 386–387.
  - [23.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 387, 388.
  - [24.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 389.
  - [25.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 337.
  - [26.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 421.
  - [27.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 389–390.

- [28.](#) Ibid., p. 439.
- [29.](#) Riutin, *Na kolēni ne vstanu*, p. 290.
- [30.](#) *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 439.
- [31.](#) Ibid., p. 434.
- [32.](#) Ibid., p. 432.
- [33.](#) Ibid., p. 437.
- [34.](#) Ibid., p. 432.
- [35.](#) Ibid.
- [36.](#) Ibid., p. 433.
- [37.](#) Ibid., pp. 433–434.
- [38.](#) Ibid., p. 433.
- [39.](#) Ibid., p. 438.
- [40.](#) Ibid.
- [41.](#) Ibid.
- [42.](#) Ibid., pp. 436–437.
- [43.](#) Ibid., p. 440.

# 37. Rout of “The Union of Marxist-Leninists”

Even before the “Union” was formed, its documents circulated widely both among rank-and-file communists, including workers,<sup>1</sup> and among prominent figures from the former oppositions. It was clear that there was an alternative for everyone who read these documents: either consider them “anti-party” and inform the Central Control Commission and the GPU about them; or agree with them (at least in principle, overall), and in this case, participate in their “modification,” adding to them their views, comments and observations. Over the course of several months of distributing the “large” and “small” documents (from June to the middle of September 1932), not one of the dozens of people (at the very least) who became familiar with them denounced their existence.

Only on 14 September did the Central Committee receive a declaration from two party members that A. V. Kaiurov had acquainted them with the appeal “To All Members of the Party.” Attached to their declaration was the text of this document. On the next day, five members of the “Union” were arrested, and after a few days, around twenty more people were arrested who had a relationship to its activity or who had become familiar with its documents.

Among twenty-four participants of the “Riutin group” and their “accomplices” uncovered by the CCC and GPU were eight former “Rightists,” three Zinovievists and three Trotskyists. But whereas the “Zinovievists” included Zinoviev and Kamenev themselves, and the “Rightists” included widely-known figures in this tendency (Uglanov, Maretsky, Slepkov, P. Petrovsky and others), the “uncovered” Trotskyists consisted of people who had not played a significant role in the Left Opposition. In addition, it is known today that the “Platform” had been read by such prominent “Trotskyists” as Mrachkovsky, Ter-Vaganian, Kavtaradze and other people who had not been drawn into the “Riutin affair.”

The next step in reprisals against the “Riutinists” was swift and panic-stricken. On 27 September, the Presidium of the Central Control Commission expelled from the party fourteen participants in the “Union” and proposed that the OGPU “uncover the still concealed members of the counter-revolutionary Riutin group, expose the behind-the-scenes instigators of this group, and treat all these White-Guard criminals, who do not wish to fully repent and state the entire truth about the group and its inspirers, with the full severity of revolutionary law.”<sup>2</sup>

On 2 October, the question of “the counter-revolutionary Riutin-Slepkov group” was opened for discussion at the united plenum of the CC and CCC. Stalin did not speak at the plenum, but he prepared theses for it in which he characterized the “Riutin platform” as “a direct call for rebellion ... At the same time, it is a document designed to unite all those dissatisfied with party policy — Trotskyists, ‘Rightists,’ ‘the Workers’ Opposition’ and so forth — for an active attack on the party line, and in particular, against comrade Stalin.” Having thus directly identified himself with the “party line,” Stalin dictated the plenum’s resolution about expelling from the party members of the “Union” and all who knew about its existence, and about taking the most decisive measures “for the full



liquidation of the activity of the White-Guard, counter-revolutionary Riutin-Slepkov group.”<sup>3</sup> The informational bulletin about the plenum made no mention of this resolution.

On 9 October there was a session of the presidium of the CCC, which heard Yaroslavsky’s report indicating that the underground group had established contact with former leaders of the “Workers’ Opposition,” of the united bloc of 1926–1927, and with several former leaders of the Right Opposition. A decree of the Presidium published in *Pravda* reported on the expulsion from the party of twenty-four “members and accomplices of a counter-revolutionary group,” which this time was called the “Riutin-Ivanov-Galkin group.” Blame was placed on Slepkov and Maretsky for distributing the documents of this group, and on Zinoviev, Kamenev and Uglanov for “knowing about the existence of this counter-revolutionary group, and receiving from this group its documents without informing the party about this.”<sup>4</sup>

Stalin carefully edited this decree, removing its entire findings where the basic positions of the “Platform” were presented. All that remained in the text of the decree was a charge made against the group for trying “to create, in an underground fashion and under the deceptive flag of ‘Marxism-Leninism,’ a bourgeois, kulak organization for the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and, in particular, for restoring the kulaks.”<sup>5</sup>

On the same day, *Pravda* published an editorial article, “Merciless Rebuff to the Enemies of Lenin’s Party.” It said that the Riutin-Galkin-Ivanov group had joined with “Trotskyists and other anti-party elements expelled from the party because of their defense of the most reactionary views, which until now had been preached by various anti-party and anti-Soviet groups.” Zinoviev, Kamenev and Uglanov were named as “accomplices of this counter-revolutionary group,” who, “instead of a merciless rebuff to these counter-revolutionaries ... preferred to discuss these documents in secret, without telling the party about them.”<sup>6</sup>

On 11 October the collegium of the OGPU, in an extra-judicial proceeding, sentenced all the people who had been included in the case of the “Union.” This sentencing was preceded by a session of the Politburo which discussed the question of the fate of the “Riutinists”; at it, Stalin demanded that Riutin be shot. However, at that time, a demand to shoot a prominent Bolshevik, even one holding such an irreconcilable position with regard to the party’s leadership, still could not find support even in Stalin’s closest circle. Kirov, Ordzhonikidze and Kuibyshev spoke against passing a death sentence on Riutin. During the vote on Stalin’s proposal, even Molotov and Kaganovich abstained.<sup>7</sup> As a result, Riutin was sentenced to ten years of solitary confinement in prison. The remaining people in the case were sentenced to lesser terms of prison or exile.

On 11 October, at a session of the Central Control Commission, Yaroslavsky informed Zinoviev, Kamenev and several other “accomplices after the fact” of the Riutin group that they had been expelled from the party, but could be re-instated in three years if they “straightened themselves out.” In doing so, Yaroslavsky declared that he could do nothing to soften their fate: “The decision is final, it was signed by Iosif Vissarionovich [Stalin] himself.”<sup>8</sup>

Kamenev and Zinoviev were sent into administrative exile. Uglanov was unemployed for several months, and then, at the beginning of 1933, received a position at one of the mines in Western Siberia, where he was soon arrested in the case of “the anti-party group of rightists.”

Altogether in the case of the “Union of Marxist-Leninists,” thirty people faced party and criminal proceedings in 1932–1933. All of them (with the exception of those for whom new cases were fabricated) had their sentences for the exact same charges reviewed in later years; all sentences were toughened, and for some of the victims, such a review was repeated two or three times. In 1937, the majority of those convicted in the “Riutin affair” were sentenced to be shot, and the remaining had their prison terms lengthened.

The Moscow Trials of 1936–1938 claimed that the various underground “centers” and “blocs” had been created when the Riutin group was formed. Familiarity with the “Riutin Platform” incriminated thousands of communists for having committed the most severe state crime.

The reason for the Stalinists’ extreme fear of the emergence of an illegal opposition organization, albeit with few members, lay in the following: the very fact of its creation revealed the consolidation of various anti-Stalin forces in the party — both former “leftists” and former “rightists,” and even those who, in the not too distant past, had belonged to the ranks of orthodox Stalinists. In speeches given by Kaganovich and Kirov at meetings of party activists in Moscow and Leningrad, emphasis was placed on the fact that “remnants of oppositions shattered by the party”<sup>9</sup> had come together in the Riutin organization.

Although the Riutin documents were held in strict secrecy, and not one of its formulations had been cited in the innumerable speeches and articles denouncing the new “counter-revolutionary group,” the content of these documents became widely known in the party. This can be seen, for example, in 1961, when several Old Bolsheviks were testifying in support of the request to rehabilitate V. N. Kaiurov. In discussions held in the Party Control Commission, they outlined the basic points of the “Riutin Platform.”

In response to reprisals against the “Riutinists,” a large number of anonymous letters arrived at the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission. They contained a purely Bolshevik evaluation of these reprisals. “How has it come to this, that the best Bolshevik-Leninists are called counter-revolutionaries? ... Who will believe this? It is not they, but the true Stalinists who are the counter-revolutionaries. You have been terrorizing the country, you have driven the party into the underground. The country is ruled by the dictator Stalin — savage and bloodthirsty, the likes of which the nation has never seen.” “99 percent of the workers have remained in solidarity with those expelled, who are true Leninists, while Stalin’s leadership is conducting a policy leading to the dying out and impoverishment of the workers. ... The masses want a Leninist party, but not a Stalinist one. It must be openly admitted, that there is no Leninist party, but there is a Stalinist one.”<sup>10</sup>

By the end of 1932, the “Manifesto” had made it abroad and was published under the title of “The Declaration of the Eighteen” in *The Socialist Herald*.

In November 1932, the *Bulletin of the Opposition* published a letter from Moscow that had been sent at the beginning of October. The letter reported that “the rightists have produced an anonymous Manifesto-declaration, an enormous document on 165 type-written pages.” Laconically, but precisely, the basic content of the “Platform” was described: an evaluation of the economic and political situation of the country as catastrophic; demands for a sharp reduction in capital investments and grain procurements; and a call to replace the bankrupt leadership. The letter also reported that the document had been widely passed from hand to hand. Very many people were familiar with it, including Zinoviev and Kamenev, who “supposedly had expressed their opinions.” Finally, the author of the letter noted that all the people expelled from the party in connection with this case had been arrested, and Zinoviev and Kamenev, probably, would soon be exiled.<sup>[11](#)</sup>

The same issue of the *Bulletin* printed an article by Trotsky, “The Stalinists are Taking Measures,” sent on 19 October from Prinkipo, which focused attention primarily on the fate of Zinoviev and Kamenev. Having enumerated the basic milestones in their political biography, Trotsky wrote that, after capitulating, they

“had done virtually everything to gain the trust of the higher-ups and once again become assimilated into the official milieu. Zinoviev ... has once again been exposing ‘Trotskyism’ and has personally even tried to burn incense in Stalin’s honor. Nothing has helped. ... Nevertheless, they have not reached the fifth anniversary of their own capitulation: they have become implicated in a ‘conspiracy,’ expelled from the party, and perhaps deported or exiled.”<sup>[12](#)</sup>

In explaining the reasons for which the unification of “rightists” and “leftists” in the Riutin group had become possible, Trotsky wrote:

“The accumulation of economic disproportions; the deterioration of the condition of the masses; the growth of discontent, both among workers and peasants; discord in the apparatus itself — such are the preconditions for the revival of each and every kind of opposition. ... The efforts of the Stalinists to pile leftists and rightists into one heap can be explained to a certain extent by the fact that both the leftists and rightists of today are talking about a retreat. This is inevitable: the need to retreat from a line of adventuristic leaps has now become a vital task of the proletarian state.”<sup>[13](#)</sup>

The “Riutin Platform” was somewhat of a stumbling block for all post-Stalin rehabilitation campaigns, conducted from the standpoint of Khrushchev’s version that, in the 1930s, there no longer remained any oppositional, anti-Stalin groupings.

During preparations for Khrushchev’s report at the Twentieth Congress in 1956, Riutin’s daughter was invited to the Central Committee of the CPSU, where they questioned her about the content of the “Riutin Platform.” In 1961, while preparing material for the Twenty-Second Congress, the Party Control Commission questioned surviving participants in the Riutin group and former officials of the GPU who had taken part in the investigation of the case. However, neither at the Twentieth, nor at the Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU was a single word spoken about the existence of this group or its documents.

Post-Stalin rehabilitations of the 1950s-1960s, reaching even several participants of the Moscow Trials of 1936–1938, did not touch the members of the Riutin group, membership in which continued to be considered an anti-Soviet crime. In 1956, after an examination of the Riutin case by military prosecutors, a resolution was passed: “not subject to review.” In 1963, Riutin’s granddaughter was

received by an official of the Party Control Commission who told her: “Your grandfather has not been rehabilitated, and they will not rehabilitate him.”<sup>14</sup>

Even in 1986, the Prosecutor’s Office of the USSR, in response to a repeated appeal to rehabilitate V. N. Kaiurov, announced that Kaiurov “was reasonably held politically responsible for participating in counter-revolutionary activity and for conducting anti-Soviet agitation.”<sup>15</sup> A similar reply came to the relatives of Riutin, who were told on 21 April 1987 that “there are no grounds for raising before judicial bodies the question of annulling the legal decisions made in relation to M. N. Riutin.”<sup>16</sup> Only in 1988 did the Supreme Court of the USSR remove the charges of committing criminally punishable acts from all participants in the “Riutin affair.”



*Martemian N. Riutin*  
(1890–1937)

The fate of Riutin, who refused to bow under the pressure of the cruelest repression, just as many Trotskyists had refused, serves as a moral reproach to political turncoats of any kind. Until the very end of 1936, Riutin was held in the Verkhneuralsk, and then in the Suzdal political isolators. From there he sent more than a hundred letters to his relatives. The volume containing Riutin’s correspondence with his family, which is preserved in the archives of the KGB, consists of almost 600 pages that were retyped in the prison office. Copies of these letters, prior to censorship cuts, were sent by Yagoda and Yezhov to “the master” himself. Such careful attention to Riutin’s personal correspondence was determined by the fact that Riutin, despite the perusal of his letters, presented in them, in rather unequivocal terms, fragments of his political outlook. In one of the letters he says that, in the fall of 1930, his “second birth” had occurred and the illusions of his previous life “had been guillotined.” “My tragedy,” added Riutin, “is, after all, not a personal one, but the tragedy of an entire epoch.” On 24 June 1934, he wrote:

“We are living through unusual times. *Contingency*, more than at any other time, hangs like a sword of Damocles over everyone’s head. No one can be certain what will happen to him tomorrow. No one knows what will happen tomorrow with those close to him. And history, the old girl, is dancing such a wild can-can, that not even the most fervent visionary can dream it up.”<sup>17</sup>

Riutin instilled the political outlook which arose after his “second birth” in his sons as well. This can be seen from the inscription on a photograph given at the end of 1932 by Vissarion Riutin, who worked in the Tupelov design department, to his friend, a young worker. The inscription says, in part:

“With rifle in one hand, and science in the other, attack those who are seizing a monopoly on the title of proletarian revolutionaries. Overthrow the slanderers, jailers and scoundrels who are hiding the poverty and further impoverishment of the people, donning, as they do so, the masks of leaders who express the will of the people.”<sup>18</sup>



Evidently, there was a proposal to include Riutin in one of the public trials in 1937. In October 1936, he was brought back to Moscow for further examination of his case. However, his declaration to the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee on 4 November 1936 showed that four years of solitary confinement had not broken him in the slightest degree. Rejecting the charges of terrorist intentions made against him, as dictated by a “craving for a new, and this time, bloody reprisal against me,” Riutin wrote that he categorically refused to give any testimony regarding this accusation, was not afraid of death, and would not ask for mercy if he was given a death sentence.<sup>19</sup> On 10 January 1937, at a closed trial session, his solitary case was heard. When Ulrikh, the chairman of the military collegium asked: “Does the defendant admit he is guilty?” Riutin again declared that he did not want to give an answer to that question, and in general refused to give any testimony regarding the content of the charges he was facing.<sup>20</sup> On the same day, the death sentence was carried out.

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1. For instance, Demidov recruited a group of workers at the AMO factory as supporters of the “Union.”

2. *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 95.

3. Martem’ian Riutin, *Na koleni ne vstanu* [I Won’t Get on My Knees], pp. 33–34.

4. *Pravda*, 11 October 1932.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Oni ne molchali*, p. 170.

8. Riutin, *Na koleni ne vstanu*, p. 284.

9. *Pravda*, 12, 14 October 1932.

10. Riutin, *Na koleni ne vstanu*, pp. 39–40.

11. *Biulleten’ oppozitsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 23.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 15 [Cf.: “The Expulsion of Zinoviev and Kamenev,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)*, p. 248].

13. *Ibid.*, p. 17 [*Ibid.*, pp. 253, 254].

14. *Voprosy istorii*, 1990, № 3, p. 185.

15. *Voprosy istorii*, 1989, № 7, p. 49.

16. *Rodina*, 1991, № 3, pp. 44–45.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 44–46.

18. *Oni ne molchali*, p. 176.

19. Riutin, *Na koleni ne vstanu*, pp. 349–350.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 311.

# 38. The Death of Nadezhda Alliluyeva

Apparently, it is no accident that the reprisals against the Riutin group coincided in time with one more tragic event — the suicide of Stalin’s wife, Nadezhda Sergeevna Alliluyeva on 9 November 1932.

Personal reasons were the immediate cause of this act — Stalin’s behavior during a Kremlin banquet held on the occasion of the anniversary of the October Revolution. Molotov’s wife, Polina S. Zhemchuzhina, told Svetlana Alliluyeva [Stalin’s daughter – *translator*] about Stalin’s rude behavior toward his wife at this banquet. Zhemchuzhina left with Nadezhda Sergeevna when the latter stormed out of the banquet.



*Nadezhda Sergeevna Alliluyeva*  
(1901–1932)



*Polina Semenovna Zhemchuzhina*  
(1897–1970)

That same night, Nadezhda Alliluyeva shot herself. According to people close to her, Svetlana Alliluyeva told how Stalin’s shock over this event was prompted most of all by the fact that “he did not understand ... why had he been stabbed in the back so horribly?” In the first days after his wife’s death,

“he was at times seized with a kind of rage or fury. The explanation for this was that mama had left him a letter ... He probably destroyed it immediately, but it did exist, those who saw it told me about this. It was terrible. It was filled with accusations and reproaches. It was not simply a personal letter; it was a letter that was partly political. And, having read it, my father might have thought that mama was at his side only for appearance, but that in actual fact she was moving somewhere along with the opposition of those years.

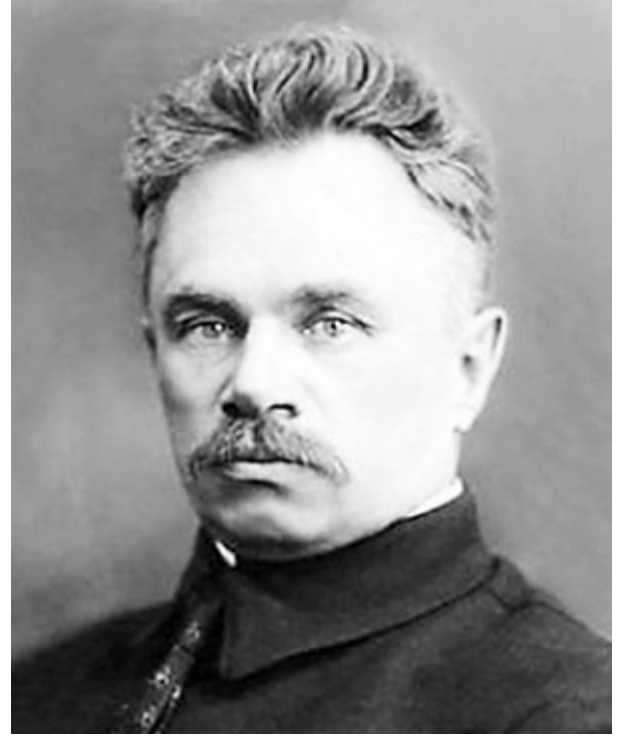
“He was shaken by this and enraged. When he came to say farewell at the civil funeral service, he approached the coffin for a minute, and then suddenly shoved it away with his hands. He then turned around and left. And he did not attend the burial.”<sup>1</sup>

Basing himself on information received from the USSR, Trotsky more concretely revealed the causes for the political discord between Stalin and his wife:

“At the very height of complete collectivization, famine in the countryside, and mass shootings, when Stalin was facing almost complete political isolation, Alliluyeva, apparently under the influence of her father, insisted on the necessity of changing policy in the village. In addition, Alliluyeva’s mother, who had close ties with the countryside, constantly told her about the horrors that were taking place there. Alliluyeva told Stalin about this. He then prohibited her from meeting with her mother or receiving her in the Kremlin. Alliluyeva met her in the city, and her attitudes grew ever stronger.”<sup>2</sup>



*Aleksandra Yulianovna Kanel*  
(1876–1936)



*Dmitry Dmitrievich Pletnev*  
(1871–1941)

The real cause of Alliluyeva’s death was known by the main physician of the Kremlin hospital, Aleksandra Kanel, her deputy Lev Levin, and Professor Pletnev. They all refused to sign a medical bulletin designed for publication in the press, in which Alliluyeva’s death was attributed to appendicitis. Kanel “managed” to die in her own bed in 1936. Levin and Pletnev ended up in 1938 among the defendants at the trial of the “right-Trotskyist bloc,” where they were accused of ill-intentioned treatment that killed Kuibyshev, Menzhinsky, Gorky and his son.

As Khrushchev recalled, Kaganovich told the Moscow apparatchiks, despite the official version, and on Stalin’s orders, that Alliluyeva had shot herself. However, many who served in the Kremlin were punished in subsequent years for sharing this information.

Alliluyeva’s suicide showed Stalin that opposition moods in the party were so strong that they had even influenced his wife. This inflamed his fury against his opponents even more. In December 1932, a conference was held for representatives of republic and *oblast* collegia of the OGPU. On Stalin’s directives, they discussed the question of increasing repression against opposition groups in the party. The conference was ordered to toughen the prison regimen for oppositionists, and for the first time,

the idea was presented about the existence of a broad conspiracy within the party against its leadership.

It may be that an immediate impetus for this conference was the discovery of one more illegal opposition grouping.



*Alliluyeva's gravestone at Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow.*





*Nadezhda Alliluyeva lying in state.*

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- [1.](#) S. Alliluyeva, *Dvadtsat' pisem k drugu* [Twenty Letters to a Friend], M., 1989, pp. 107–108.
  - [2.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin*, vol. II, p. 212.

# 39. “Why Can No One be Found Who Could Remove Stalin?”

On 19 and 22 November 1932, candidate-member of the Central Committee Saveliev sent Stalin two letters containing information sent to him by party member Nikolsky. The latter had asked Saveliev to tell Stalin about the content of his conversations with Nikolai B. Eismont, member of the party since 1907, and People’s Commissar of Supply for the RSFSR. According to Nikolsky, Eismont told him that the current economic and political situation placed the country before a dilemma: “either Stalin, or peasant uprisings.” In describing the situation in the CC, Eismont said: “If one speaks individually with members of the CC, the majority are against Stalin, but when they vote, they vote unanimously ‘for’ him.” The most “criminal” statement made by Eismont, as recounted by Nikolsky, was the following:

“Tomorrow we are traveling with Tolmachëv (member of the party since 1904, at the time head of Glavdortrans [Main Road and Transport Authority] of the Council of People’s Commissars of the RSFSR – *V. R.*) to see A. P. Smirnov, and I know that the first sentence with which he’ll greet us will be: ‘And how is it that in the entire country not a single person can be found who could remove ‘him’?’”<sup>1</sup>

Mentioning Aleksandr Petrovich Smirnov was particularly threatening. A member of the party since 1896, A. P. Smirnov at that time was a member of the Central Committee and a candidate-member of the Orgburo. Between 1928 and 1930, he had occupied the posts of secretary of the CC and deputy chairman of the Sovnarkom of the RSFSR.

A few days after Stalin had received Saveliev’s letters, Eismont and Tolmachëv were interrogated by the Central Control Commission and the OGPU. In his testimony and during a face-to-face confrontation with Nikolsky, Eismont denied his most odious accusations, but acknowledged that in conversations with Nikolsky and other comrades, he had sharply criticized the methods of conducting collectivization, and he had said that it would have been possible to avoid many victims “if the CC had acted in a timely manner and firmly stopped the distortions.” Eismont also confessed that he had gotten the impression that “a number of members of the Central Committee of the VKP(b), for instance, Komarov, Kolotilov, Shmidt, Tmsky, the others I don’t remember, have doubts about a number of decisions made by the Central Committee, but do not vote against them, either out of consideration of party unity, or they consider it useless, having in mind that Stalin will nevertheless have a majority.” Eismont formulated the most “criminal” phrase attributed to him in the following way: “In conversations with Smirnov and Tolmachëv, we said: could it be that there is not a man in the party who could replace Stalin?”<sup>2</sup>

During interrogations at the CCC, Eismont and Tolmachëv said that they were worried about the collapse of kolkhozes created by force and about the destruction in them of any personal interest in labor, which “is maintained through naked compulsion and repression.” They felt that it was possible

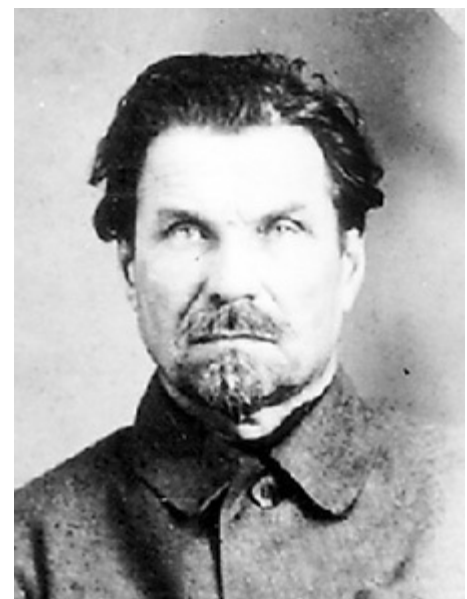
for peasant uprisings to occur in the Northern Caucasus in the spring of 1933. At a session of the presidium of the CCC, the center of attention was held, of course, by the phrase about the need to “remove” Stalin. In this vein, Postyshev ominously declared to those being interrogated: “For us it is clear what ‘remove’ means. Remove means to kill. For me, when people say ‘remove,’ this means kill. This is criminal and counter-revolutionary language.”<sup>3</sup>

The Presidium of the CCC assigned further conduct of the Eismont and Tolmachëv case to the OGPU. Immediately after the Presidium’s session, they were arrested. At the same time, their comrade, the old Bolshevik Vladimir Ponozin was also arrested. In subsequent interrogations, it became clear that Smirnov, Eismont and Tolmachëv had exchanged opinions about members of the CC from whom they expected support for their view that it was necessary to replace Stalin at the post of General Secretary. As possible candidates for this post, they named A. P. Smirnov himself, as well as Voroshilov and Kalinin. According to Eismont, “they had been designated as old Bolsheviks.” Judging from everything, the inclinations of the “troika” were shared by many communists close to them, including members of the CC. They therefore hoped that “the difficulties being endured will force, and already are forcing, the CC to change course toward what we feel is correct.”<sup>4</sup>

The investigation’s attention was focused on A. P. Smirnov; it managed to obtain the following testimony about his views. Smirnov said: “Who the hell knows how low we’ve sunk, even lower than the Tsarist government ever did.”; “Comrade Smirnov, knowing agriculture very well, vividly told about the inability to organize labor in the kolkhozes and to awaken interest among the collective farmers.” Smirnov told his comrades that the plan of grain procurements could not be met, especially in Ukraine; he made a table showing that “we now have slipped to the level of the 1880s and 1890s, when it comes to the procurement of meat.”<sup>5</sup>

Conveying this information in a report sent to the chairman of the CCC, Rudzutak, the head of the secret-political department of the OGPU, Molchanov, added that, by 1930, they had received information from a number of people involved in the case of the “Working Peasants’ Party,” that they were close to Smirnov.

The investigators were particularly interested in meetings and conversations between those arrested and Rykov. In the investigation material, the given case even had another name: “The Case of the Rykov School” (evidently because A. P. Smirnov had been Rykov's deputy at the Sovnarkom of the RSFSR in 1928–1930). However, in this part of the case, they only managed to obtain two pieces of information from those under investigation: (1) After Eismont returned from the Northern Caucasus, Rykov asked him to visit and tell him about the situation in this region and about the



*Aleksandr Petrovich Smirnov*  
(1877–1938)

activity of the Kaganovich commission (this meeting did not take place); (2) Rykov said: “We are going through a difficult year. If only we can survive it.”<sup>6</sup>

During the investigation, Nikolsky continued to play an active role as a provocateur. He was joined by his wife, who, as he put it, “worked on my instructions as a voluntary intelligence agent in this case” and helped establish that Smirnov had been receiving “instant information” from his friends in the OGPU about the course of the investigation.<sup>7</sup> As a reward for these actions, Nikolsky was sent personally by Stalin and Kaganovich to work as deputy head of construction at BAM [the Baikal-Amur railway]. In 1933–1934, the GPU made him an agent, and in 1942 he became an agent of the NKVD. His wife also worked as a secret-police agent at BAM, and, in particular, she discovered letters from Trotsky belonging to one of her colleagues, after which he was arrested.

The case of Smirnov-Eismont-Tolmachëv was examined at the joint session of the Politburo of the CC and Presidium of the CCC, and then by a special commission of the CCC. Then it was submitted to the January 1933 joint plenum of the CC and CCC, where Stalin uttered an inarticulate, but sinister phrase: “After all, it is only enemies who could say that, remove Stalin and there will be nothing.”<sup>8</sup>

In the plenum’s decree “On the Anti-Party Grouping of Eismont, Tolmachëv, Smirnov, A. P. and Others,” the three old Bolsheviks were charged with creating an underground group, which “like the Riutin-Slepkov grouping, set as their task, essentially, the rejection of the policy of industrializing the nation and the restoration of capitalism, in particular, of the kulaks.”<sup>9</sup> The plenum expelled Eismont and Tolmachëv from the party, and Smirnov from the Central Committee. Following this, Eismont, Tolmachëv and Poponin were extra-judicially sentenced to imprisonment in a political isolator for three years. Smirnov was expelled from the party in December 1934. Freed from prison ahead of schedule, Eismont died in an airplane crash in 1935. The remaining participants in the “group” were rearrested in 1937. Smirnov and Tolmachëv were then shot.

A. P. Smirnov was rehabilitated along judicial and party lines in 1960, and Eismont and Tolmachëv, in 1962–1963. In the course of the “re-investigation” of this case, there was a conversation between an instructor of the party commission of the CC and Nikolsky. This discussion recalled, albeit in an “upside-down” manner, the interrogations of the Central Control Commission of the 1930s. Then, the “party investigators” wanted to force upon the person being interrogated a version of the “guilt” of the accused. Now the “party investigator” just as insistently tried to obtain from Nikolsky a version of the “innocence” of the people for whom a “case” was being created on the basis of his denunciation. However, Nikolsky “stubbornly defended his testimony that had been laid out in Saveliev’s letter to Stalin.” In recounting his conversation with Eismont, he said: “Eismont put the question this way: he could not continue this way any further. The situation in the country was terrible. We had to make a choice for ourselves: either go with Rykov, or with Stalin.” Several times the instructor tried to “distract” him from such an account of the conversation, which bore, from the standpoint of the 1960s, a “criminal” character. In response, Nikolsky declared: “And nonetheless the word ‘remove’ is etched in my memory, Eismont truly used it.” Then the investigator said that during their interrogations, Smirnov, Tolmachëv, and Eismont categorically denied any intention of



physically removing Stalin. However, even after this, Nikolsky repeated: “Nonetheless, in the conversation with me, Eismont said this.”<sup>[10](#)</sup>

Returning to the events of 1933, let us note that the investigation had information in its possession indicating that the views of Smirnov and Eismont were shared by more than twenty old Bolsheviks, including several members of the Central Committee. However, only four were brought to account before the party, and only three people faced criminal charges. In the decree of the January plenum, only Rykov, Tomsy and candidate-member of the CC Shmidt were charged with “ties” to Smirnov and Eismont, and “by their entire conduct gave good reason for any anti-party elements to count on the support of former leaders of the Right Opposition.” The plenum demanded from them “a radical change in their behavior in questions of fighting against anti-party elements” and warned that “if their present conduct continues, strict measures of party discipline will be used against them.”<sup>[11](#)</sup>

As for Bukharin, the January plenum stated that, in contrast to his former supporters, he “is working a great deal and well at major practical work.” Voroshilov said that he believed Bukharin “one hundred times more than Rykov, and a thousand times more than Tomsy. Tomsy is crafty, and Rykov is trying to be sincere, but so far he has not succeeded. Bukharin is sincere and honest.”<sup>[12](#)</sup> Bukharin himself, at a speech during the plenum, asserted that the type of party regime which the party needed now existed, and stressed that “the historically developed leadership of our party, headed by comrade Stalin, this energetic, iron figure, has fully won the right to lead the entire future process.”<sup>[13](#)</sup>

These words were spoken at the height of the repressions that had been unleashed against the participants of the so-called “Bukharin school.”

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<sup>[1](#)</sup>. *Neizvestnaia Rossiia. XX vek*, p. 75.

<sup>[2](#)</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>[3](#)</sup>. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1990, № 11, p. 67.

<sup>[4](#)</sup>. *Neizvestnaia Rossiia. XX vek*, pp. 93–94.

<sup>[5](#)</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 90.

<sup>[6](#)</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>[7](#)</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>[8](#)</sup>. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1990, № 11, p. 72.

<sup>[9](#)</sup>. *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh*, vol. 6, p. 32.

<sup>[10](#)</sup>. *Neizvestnaia Rossiia. XX vek*, pp. 67, 119, 121, 125.

<sup>[11](#)</sup>. *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh*, vol. 6, p. 33.

<sup>[12](#)</sup>. Cited from: G. A. Bordiugov, V. A. Koslov, *Istoriia i kon”iunktura*, p. 104.

<sup>[13](#)</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

## 40. The Case of the “Bukharin School”

From October 1932 to April 1933, thirty-eight people were arrested in the case of the “anti-party counter-revolutionary group of Rightists, Slepkov and others (the “Bukharin school”).” The arrested included Aleksandr Iu. Aikhenvald, Valentin N. Astrov, Aleksandr D. Zaitsev, Dmitry P. Maretsky, Pyotr G. Petrovsky, Aleksandr N. Slepkov, Vasily N. Slepkov, Nikolai A. Uglanov, and Efim V. Tsetlin. Those arrested were presented with what had already become the standard charge against “new” oppositions: active struggle against the Soviet regime to restore the capitalist order in the USSR, counter-revolutionary activity and agitation “in the interests of the international bourgeoisie.”<sup>1</sup> As more concrete charges, members of this case were accused of holding conversations with sharp criticism of the Stalin leadership and of discussing a number of draft manuscripts. Discussions of political problems of this type were “registered” as illegal conferences. During transfer to a prison for re-investigation during the new case, A. N. Slepkov said:

“The time now is such, that if three comrades gather together and begin to talk sincerely, then they must confess that this was an organization, and if five comrades gather, then they must confess that it was a conference.”<sup>2</sup>



*“The Bukharin School” in 1926. Left to right, bottom row: Ivan Kravel, Vasily Slepkov; middle row: Dmitry Maretsky, Aleksandr Zaitsev, Nikolai Bukharin, Yan Sten, Aleksandr Slepkov; top row: Grigory Maretsky, David Rosit, Aleksei Stetsky, Aleksandr Troitsky.*

However, an organization of “rightists” actually did exist from 1930 through 1932. Having entered into contact with the Riutin group, they set the same tasks as the latter: to achieve a fundamental change in party policy — a return to NEP and the restoration of party and soviet democracy by means of replacing the party leadership and returning the following people to the Politburo: Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsy, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Sokolnikov and Uglanov.

At the end of August or beginning of September in 1932, a conference of “rightists” was held with the participation of more than ten people, where the question was discussed of creating a broad, anti-Stalin bloc.

An idea of the moods among the group’s participants is given in a statement that Uglanov sent in March 1933 to the Central Committee. He confessed that, at the beginning of 1930, he said in conversations with his comrades that “the general line has failed, the leadership has become bankrupt, and it will search for scapegoats.” In 1931, he met with a group of “young rightists” (A. Slepkov, P. Petrovsky and others) in Saratov and “did not object to their actions,” consisting of the recruitment of supporters from among the youth. By the fall of 1932, according to Uglanov, “a movement to renew the struggle against the Central Committee” had once again begun among the rightists. During this period, Uglanov reestablished contact with a number of his former supporters in the Right Opposition. In discussing the situation in the country, they came to the conclusion that the majority of the peasantry, during the sowing campaign, had organized “an all-union slow-down [Italian strike] ... against the party’s undertakings” and that the leadership of the party, headed by Stalin, “was not in a state to overcome the enormous difficulties ... in the nation’s economic and political life.” Therefore, continued Uglanov, he “considered — and pointed this out to a number of his supporters — that it was once again necessary to bring into the leadership of the party and country the former leaders of the earlier oppositions, namely, Rykov, Bukharin, Tomsy, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Sokolnikov, and Smilga. Of course, it is clear that such a shift (in the party’s leadership – *V. R.*) should have led to a significant change in policy, and in the countryside most of all.” Uglanov found support for these plans from Tomsy. In a conversation with him, he understood that Tomsy “did not exclude the possibility of acting against the CC in this period or another.” Then, the “young rightists” came to Moscow, organized a conference to discuss political problems, made contact with Uglanov and discussed with him the situation in the country and the advisability of linking up with other oppositionists. Uglanov not only did not object to this, but he even said that it would be well to establish such contact.<sup>3</sup>

There are grounds to believe that Bukharin contributed to the uncovering of the illegal group of “rightists.” In February 1937 (while he was still at liberty), he wrote an extensive statement to the plenum of the Central Committee. In it he reported that, in the summer of 1932, “when there was certain unrest,” he (Bukharin), “fearing that Uglanov, due to his illness and instability, would once again vacillate to the right, and that his breakdown would be attributed to me, made a special visit to him to forestall him.” In connection with this, Bukharin mentioned his declaration to the Politburo on 7 October 1932, in which he said:

“Knowing Uglanov’s unhealthy and unbalanced state, and fearing some kind of fortuitous and negative influences on him (outside of work, I had seen Uglanov only once or twice over the last two years), I warned him against such a danger, indicating the absolute necessity of cordially ‘pulling the wagon,’ of working with all his might, and so forth, despite any difficulties.”<sup>4</sup>

In ascribing a “terrorist” character to the organization of “rightists,” decisive assistance was rendered to the investigators by Valentin Astrov, who recounted in 1989 some of the details of his conduct at interrogation. In February 1933, he and other “Bukharinists” were arrested on charges of



*Valentin N. Astrov  
(1898–1993)*

belonging to the Riutin group (although, according to him, he was not familiar with its documents). Then, he and other “Bukharin pupils” were “transferred” by GPU investigators to “the anti-party group of rightists.” In the course of the investigation of this group’s case, Astrov reported that he had been witness at the beginning of the 1930s to conversations among “rightists” about the necessity of “a palace coup” and even to people crying out: “Give me a revolver, I’ll shoot Stalin.” “I never took these excesses seriously,” wrote Astrov, “however I had already reported them in 1933.”<sup>5</sup>

There is reason to believe that among the “rightists” there actually were “terrorist intentions” with regard to Stalin. A. Avtorkhanov recalled how one of the most radically inclined “rightists,” a student at the IKP [Institute of Red Professors], said to him in a conversation that occurred in 1929:

“A coup d’état is not a counter-revolution, it is only a cleansing of the party at one blow from its own baseness. For this, we don’t need Bonaparte’s capital garrison. It is quite enough to have the dagger of a Soviet Brutus and a few words about the deceased before an indignant mob of fanatics: ‘I killed Caesar not because I loved him less, but because

I loved Rome more,’ ... There is no other country that is as rich with such Brutuses as ours. We only have to awaken them.”<sup>6</sup>

In 1932–1933, Trotsky’s slogan, “Remove Stalin,” found ever greater support among new opposition groups. We have been persuaded that it was repeated verbatim by members of the groupings around Riutin and A. P. Smirnov. An ever growing portion of oppositionally-inclined members of the party recognized that the only escape from this severe crisis for the party and the nation was to remove one person from the leadership. Ever more acutely, the fatal consequences of his autocratic rule were becoming clear. However, it was just as obvious that it was already impossible to overthrow Stalin and his clique by means of party reforms. This could not help but give birth to “terrorist intentions” in the consciousness of individual oppositionists. Understanding this, Stalin carried out a provocative counter-move, insuring himself against terrorist acts — a preventive



accusation of terrorist intentions against all who believed that his removal from power was necessary.



*A. Slepkov, The Proletariat and Peasantry in Revolution, 1925.*



*Aleksandr N. Slepkov  
(1899–1937)*

The investigation did not manage to achieve confirmation of “terrorist intentions” from those in the case “of the anti-party counter-revolutionary group of rightists.” More than half of those involved in the case did not confess their guilt in belonging to this group. Nevertheless, thirty-four of the thirty-eight arrested were sentenced by the collegium of the OGPU to prison terms of two to eight years, or to exile for one to three years. Only four, including Uglanov, were released from custody, and their case was closed. In May 1933, Uglanov was appointed head of the Fishery Trust in Tobolsk, where he was reinstated in the party in 1934.

The majority of those sentenced were imprisoned in the Suzdal political isolator, where they established contact between themselves and discussed future tactics of their behavior. In the middle of 1934, several of them were set free. During the years of the Great Terror, they were all rearrested. The overwhelming majority of them were shot between 1936 and 1941.

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1. *Reabilitatsiia*, p. 263.
  2. *Ibid.*, p. 277.
  3. *Neizvestnaia Rossiia, XX vek*, pp. 62–63.

- [4.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1992, № 2–3, p. 22.
- [5.](#) *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 29 March 1989.
- [6.](#) A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiia vlasti*, pp. 179–180.

# 41. The Case of the “Counter-Revolutionary Trotskyist Group”

Along with their unrelenting search for “Rightists,” the OGPU were just as persistent in their efforts to uncover the “Trotskyist underground.”

In January 1933, Stalin was sent a report from the secret-political department of the OGPU about the results of surveillance of “Trotskyists” who had announced their break from the opposition. It stated that in 1930–1931, many of the oppositionists who had endorsed I. N. Smirnov’s declaration about ceasing factional activity, did not agree with the tactic of waiting things out and, after their return from exile and from prison, had renewed their illegal activity among workers. Although several groups, including Smirnov’s supporters, were liquidated soon thereafter, a deeply conspiratorial organization headed by Smirnov himself still remained, including more than 200 former active Trotskyists. This organization had its branches in Leningrad, Kharkov, Gorky, Kiev, Rostov-on-the-Don, and other cities, as well as groups in Gosplan, Narkomtiazhprom [People’s Commissariat of Heavy Industry] and other institutions.

The arrests of members of this organization began in 1932. Eighty-nine people were arrested in all, including such well-known oppositionists as I. N. Smirnov, Ter-Vaganian and Preobrazhensky. Almost all of the arrested had been expelled from the party in 1926–1932 for “Trotskyist factional activity”; thirty-five of them had been re-admitted to the party in 1929–1932. Among those under arrest were economic leaders, engineering and technological specialists, economists, workers, secondary education teachers, journalists, etc.

Attached to the case as substantial evidence were items found during searches: type-written copies of [Lenin’s] “Testament,” Trotskyist leaflets, and correspondence between some of those arrested and Trotsky or exiled Trotskyists.

Almost all of those under arrest conducted themselves courageously at the investigation, refusing to confess that their views were counter-revolutionary and denying the existence of a conspiratorial organization. Several under investigation generally refused to give any testimony. Twenty-five people firmly denied all the charges made against them.

The tactic of others under investigation consisted in showing the absurdity of charging them with criminal liability for striving to restore Leninist norms in party life. Thus, at his first interrogation, Preobrazhensky declared:

“I understood too late, ... that the party cannot allow its members the luxury of having separate opinions, or special points of view in evaluating a situation. ... My mistake evidently lay in the fact that I always mechanically turned my thoughts to ‘the way it was under Lenin.’”<sup>1</sup>

When he was arrested for the second time in 1936, Preobrazhensky described his political moods in 1932 at an interrogation by the NKVD:

“1. The tempos of collectivization undertaken were beyond our powers. The village moved away from middle-peasant farming and did not assimilate collective farming, and as a result there was a sharp fall in the productive forces of agriculture; there were enormous difficulties in food supply, especially in Ukraine, and a number of absolutely unnecessary acts of cruelty in the struggle against the kulaks.

“2. Tempos of industrialization were beyond our strength. As a result, the plan of capital investment was not fulfilled; deadlines for a number of construction projects were not met; the personal consumption of the workers fell; workers were overstrained and, as a result, there was a general worsening of the material position of the proletariat.

“3. Incorrect policy in the Comintern is leading to the isolation of the Communist Party in the struggle against fascism, especially in Germany.

“4. There is an unbearable party regime, in which it is impossible to discuss a single urgent question troubling the nation. Trotskyist inner-party democracy has stood in contrast to party discipline.

“5. On the ideological front, there is complete stagnation. This is a result of the policy of the Central Committee, which has extended the discipline of thinking to the centralization of thinking, and, by cultivating a lack of talent, is holding back any intellectual development of the youth.



*Evgeny A. Preobrazhensky*  
(1886–1937)

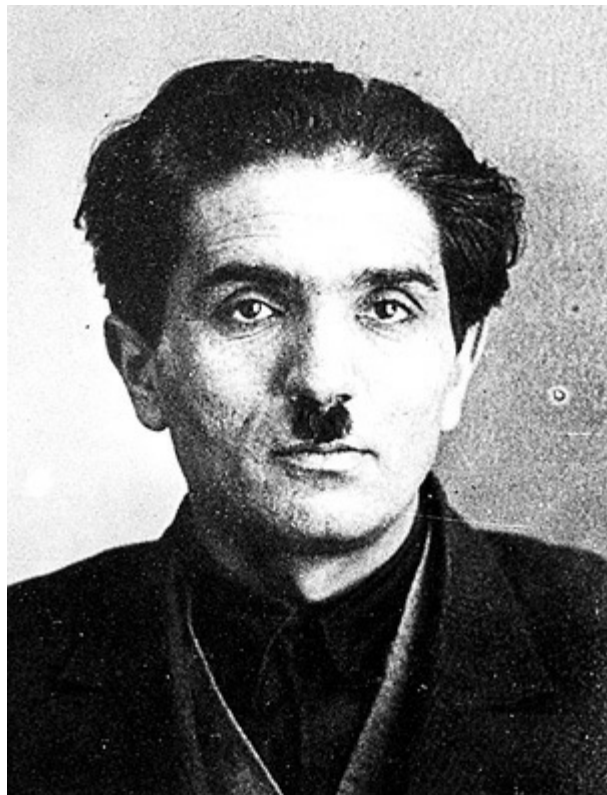
“From all this, naturally, I drew the conclusion about needing to fight against the policy of the CC and the leadership of the party.”<sup>2</sup>

In this way, Preobrazhensky in 1932 fully repudiated his illusions from the end of the 1920s, regarding the “left” character of Stalin’s policy and, essentially, moved to the positions which were held at that time by Trotsky and other authors of the *Bulletin of the Opposition*. It must also be emphasized that, even in the monstrous conditions of an investigation in 1937, Preobrazhensky stated his political credo with dignity, without resorting to qualifications denigrating his views, which the investigators were demanding.

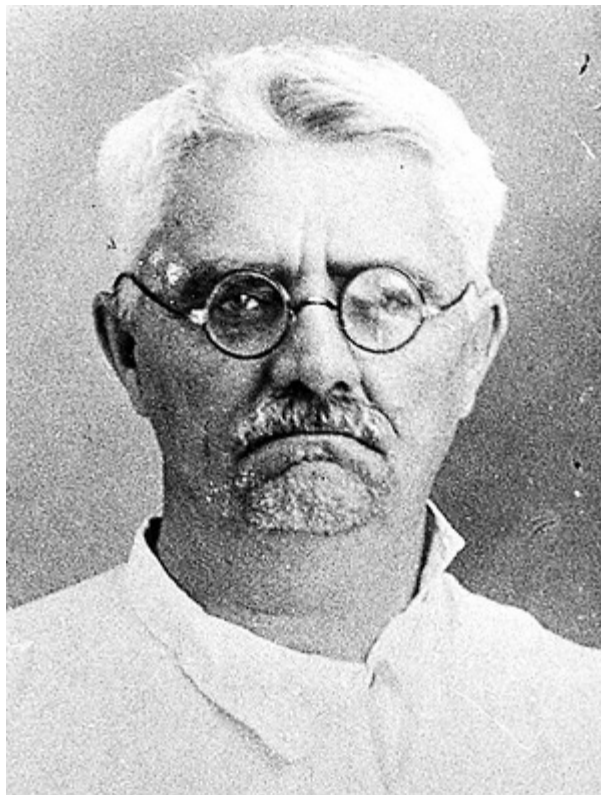
This device — turning every opposition statement and action into something criminal by adding epithets like “counter-revolutionary” — was

widely used during investigations already in 1933. Thus, one of the depositions in the case of the “counter-revolutionary Trotskyist group” was formulated in the following way: the person under investigation confessed that he was guilty “of receiving counter-revolutionary literature, counter-revolutionary Trotskyist information, and of maintaining ties with a group of Trotskyist double-dealers headed by I. N. Smirnov.” He also stated that the “Trotskyists” had spread “counter-revolutionary insinuations and rumors” against Stalin.<sup>3</sup>





*Vagarshak A. Ter-Vaganian*  
(1893–1936)



*Ivan Nikitich Smirnov*  
(1881–1936)

The people arrested in the given case were declared guilty of participating in “an illegal counter-revolutionary group,” which supposedly “had set the goal of reactivating an underground Trotskyist organization on the basis of the new tactic of double-dealing in order to penetrate the VKP(b), as well as the state and economic apparatus.”<sup>4</sup> In addition, they were incriminated for having established ties with oppositionists remaining in exile (in particular, with Rakovsky) and for distributing illegal documents sent by the latter.

After hearing the report about the investigation of this case, given on 20 February 1933 by Molchanov, the head of the secret-political department of the OGPU, the Party collegium of the CCC expelled thirty people in absentia from the party. From January to October of the same year, eighty-eight of the eighty-nine who had been arrested were punished by decrees of the Special Board of the collegium of the OGPU. Forty-one people were sentenced to imprisonment for three to five years, and forty-five were sent into exile for three years.

After these victimizations, the Stalinists continued to play a provocative game with several of the most prominent people who had been sentenced in this case. In August 1933, Preobrazhensky was released from exile in Semipalatinsk, and in October reinstated in the party. In January 1934, he was allowed to deliver a repentant speech at the Seventeenth Party Congress. In October 1934, Ter-Vaganian was readmitted to the party. Soon he was summoned to a session of the collegium of the CCC, at which Shkiryatov once again demanded that he name people who had met with I. N. Smirnov, and “who still remain hidden, or have entered the party.” In May 1935, Ter-Vaganian was expelled from the party for a third time and sent, by decision of the Special Board, into exile for five years.

The majority of those sentenced in the case of the I. N. Smirnov group were shot between 1936 and 1938; those remaining were repeatedly subjected to further repression. From 1956 to 1988, the sentences of the Special Board for twenty-four people in this case were annulled. The remaining victims were rehabilitated and posthumously reinstated in the party in 1989–1990.

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[1.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1991, № 6, p. 85.

[2.](#) *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, 1992, № 2, p. 91.

[3.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1991, № 6, p. 85.

[4.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 82.



*Lev Lvovich Sedov*  
*(1906–1938)*

## 42. The Formation of an Anti-Stalin Bloc

From rehabilitation material gathered by the Yakovlev commission, it is unclear whether the investigators in 1932–1933 had been able to uncover ties between Smirnov and his comrades, and Trotsky-Sedov. The commission only reports that, with regard to I. N. Smirnov, Ter-Vaganian and Ufimtsev, the investigators had discovered Trotsky's articles and letters not only from 1928, when correspondence among "Trotskyists" was semi-legal, but also from 1929–1931, when Trotsky was in exile and contact with him was strictly prosecuted.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, material from the Trotsky archive indicates that it was precisely Ivan Nikitich Smirnov who became the initiator of creating a wide anti-Stalin bloc, uniting all the main old and new opposition groups and entering into contact with Trotsky. This bloc was so well cloaked in secrecy, that the NKVD learned about its existence only during preparation for the first Moscow Trial in 1936.

As early as July 1931, during his presence on an official assignment in Berlin, I. N. Smirnov had met several times with Sedov and discussed the question of collaboration between his group and Trotsky.

In the fall of 1932, Goltsman [Holtzman], one of the future defendants at the Moscow Trial of 1936, handed Sedov a letter addressed to Trotsky from Smirnov, as well as an article by the latter, "The Economic Situation in the USSR," soon published in the *Bulletin of the Opposition* (1932, № 31). The same issue of the *Bulletin* published "Correspondence from Moscow," written on the basis of stories from Goltsman about the political situation in the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup>



*Yuri Petrovich Gaven*  
(1884–1936)

Smirnov's letter reported about negotiations between four oppositionist groups (of Smirnov, the Zinovievists, Lominadze-Sten and Safarov-Tarkhanov), about the creation of an opposition bloc. Additional information about the bloc was reported to Smirnov by the old Bolshevik Yuri P. Gaven, who also passed on information about a group "O" (perhaps from the last name "Osinsky"), which he had joined, and apparently, he brought a letter from Trotsky to the Smirnov group. Detailed information about Trotsky's views of events occurring in the USSR was sent by Sedov to Smirnov via Goltsman.

By this time, Sedov was maintaining contact with a wide network of correspondents in the Soviet Union and in several Soviet diplomatic missions abroad. He received information from them



about events in the Soviet Union, which was then published in the *Bulletin of the Opposition*. In correspondence between Sedov and Trotsky, Smirnov figured under the pseudonym “Ko” (“Kolokoltsev” or “Kolokolnikov”); Goltsman — under the pseudonym “Orlov”; and Gaven — under the pseudonym of “Sorokin.” In addition, people in the Soviet Union with whom Sedov maintained regular contact included an old Bolshevik, who had previously worked in the Soviet trade mission in London and had published correspondence in the *Bulletin* under the pseudonym of “Svoi”; I. N. Pereverzev, who operated under the pseudonym “Pyotr”; and Kocherets, translator of Aragon’s works, who sent Sedov secret party documents. Among Sedov’s other correspondents were Nadezhda Ostrovskaya, who in the past had worked for the Cheka, and Rafail, an active participant in the opposition of 1923.

In 1931–1932, information also made it abroad from Kamenev and Zinoviev, who exchanged opinions with their foreign co-thinkers about Stalin’s policy in Germany, which was paving the way for Hitler. Ties between Zinoviev and his co-thinkers abroad, especially Ruth Fischer and Arkadi Maslow, former leaders of the German Communist Party, were maintained by the old Bolshevik Grigory L. Shklovsky. A similar role was apparently played by the Soviet ambassador in Prague, Aleksandr Arosev.

In a letter sent to Trotsky at the end of 1932, Sedov reported that a bloc had been organized, consisting of former “capitulators” (members of the Smirnov group), Zinovievists, and the Sten-Lominadze group; the Safarov-Tarkhanov group would soon join it. During negotiations about the bloc, Zinoviev and Kamenev said that, in 1927, they had committed the most serious political mistake of their lives by breaking with the Left Opposition.

The letter also stated that the exposure of the Smirnov group was caused by an accidental arrest of one of its members. From “his man” in the GPU, Smirnov had “all the information” about the course of the investigation, and as a result of this could prepare for an arrest. A few days before his arrest, Smirnov told Sedov’s “informer”: “X has betrayed, I expect an arrest from day to day.” Basing himself on the “informer’s” reports, Sedov wrote that the exposure was a serious blow, but that “contacts with workers have been preserved.”<sup>3</sup>

Similar information was contained in a report by Sedov sent to the International Secretariat of the Left Opposition in 1934. In Sedov’s letters, he reported that the “rightists” (supporters of Riutin and Slepko) had critically rethought their past attitude toward the Left Opposition and had tried to create a combination of two programs: the economic program of neo-NEP and the political program of party democracy. They had entered into negotiations with I. N. Smirnov as a representative of the bloc of the four above-mentioned groups; the Smirnov group felt that reaching an agreement with the “rightists” would be advisable.

In a letter replying to Sedov, Trotsky said that the proposal of a bloc was acceptable to him on the whole. Stressing that the issue was precisely about a bloc, and not about unification with “new allies,” Trotsky wrote that, for the time being, the task of the bloc should be confined to a mutual exchange of information. He proposed that the “allies” send correspondence for the *Bulletin*; the

editorial board would publish them, while reserving the right to add comments. Trotsky asked Sedov to send him additional information about who had signed the “Declaration of the Eighteen” (the Riutin “Manifesto”) published in *The Socialist Herald*, and about the position of the “ultra-left groups” (the Democratic Centralists, Workers’ Opposition, and others).<sup>4</sup>

The bloc that had formed in the fall of 1932 never managed to carry out real activity, because representatives of its various groups were arrested by the GPU at the end of 1932 and the beginning of 1933. The first victims were Zinoviev, Kamenev and Sten, who were exiled for connection with the Riutin group, and after them, Slepkov and other “rightists.” Two months later, Smirnov was arrested, as well as other “Trotskyists” who had returned to underground activity. The surviving Zinovievists, who had gathered after the arrests at the apartment of Bogdan, Zinoviev’s former secretary, decided that the activity of their group had to be temporarily discontinued.

The French historian Pierre Broué, the first to publish the correspondence between Sedov and Trotsky, suggests that as a result of the arrests in 1932–1933, Stalin and the GPU did not learn about the attempt to form a bloc. Smirnov was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment for his “foreign contacts” (evidently, with Sedov – *V. R.*), but not as the inspirer of a “bloc.” Another correspondent of the *Bulletin*, Konstantinov, was arrested and sentenced for having spoken critically about Stalin with his comrades, but he had not been identified as a “Trotskyist.” Pereverzev, Kocherets, Ostrovskaya, and Rafail were arrested for the activity of their separate groups. However, many people who were drawn into the bloc or had contact with it, for instance, Lominadze, Safarov, Tarkhanov, Yevdokimov, Safonova, and Shatskin, remained at liberty and were not even expelled from the party. If the Stalinist press never mentioned the “bloc” in 1932–1936, then it is only because the OGPU did not know of its existence. Apparently, the investigators in that period took the Riutin group to be the “opposition bloc,” for it was indeed a bloc of Right and Left oppositionists.<sup>5</sup>

Although the GPU conducted careful surveillance of the activity of Trotsky and Sedov, they did not manage to record any of their meetings with co-thinkers from the USSR. Having carried out a series of arrests of participants in various opposition groups at the end of 1932 and the beginning of 1933, the GPU gained some information about their anti-Stalin inclinations and actions. However, not a single one of those arrested mentioned under interrogation any attempts to form a bloc of opposition tendencies, nor did anyone give away their comrades connected with the bloc. Only after a new wave of arrests, following the murder of Kirov, after interrogations and re-interrogations of the arrested with the application of savage torture, did Stalin receive information about the bloc, which became an incentive for him to unleash the Great Purge.<sup>6</sup>

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1. *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1991, № 6, p. 82.

2. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1936, № 52–53, pp. 37–38.

3. P. Broué, “Party Opposition to Stalin (1930–1932) and the First Moscow Trial,” in: *Essays on Revolutionary Culture and Stalinism*, Slavica Publishers, 1990, pp. 99–100.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

[5.](#) Ibid., p. 106.

[6.](#) Ibid.

# 43. The Case of the “Illegal Trotskyist Center”

After the arrest of the Smirnov group, the illegal activity of the Trotskyists did not cease. At the end of 1933 and beginning of 1934, the OGPU found traces of “an illegal all-union center” of a Trotskyist organization, which was preparing escapes of exiled oppositionists in order to transfer them to the underground. The center intended to convene a secret all-union conference of Trotskyists in the spring of 1934. Arrests of Trotskyists were made in various cities in connection with this case. The first to be arrested was Anna P. Livshits, who, during two months of interrogations, denied the existence of an underground Trotskyist center. Then they managed to obtain a confession from her that, in March 1931, she had fled from exile; at the end of 1932, she had made contact with Rakovsky, and on his instructions was preparing to travel to all the places where Trotskyists were in exile in order to unite all the oppositionists located there.<sup>1</sup> During searches of people she had named, articles and letters from Trotsky were seized, as well as a leaflet written by prisoners at the Verkhneuralsk political isolator that called for a hunger strike against the more stringent repression. Thus, the OGPU learned of Trotsky’s continuing contacts with oppositionists who were not only at liberty, but in places of imprisonment and exile.

According to information held by the OGPU, the backbone of the “All-Union Trotskyist Center” consisted of people who had been expelled from the party between 1927 and 1930 for participating in the Left Opposition, and who were serving their terms of exile in various regions of the country. The accusations made against them of striving for consolidation, unification and underground activity were apparently not completely unfounded.

The nature of the investigation can be seen from statements by surviving defendants of this case that were given in 1956–1957: “For a long time I didn’t sign the record of the interrogation, whereupon the investigator told me, if I don’t sign, then my father and my fiancé will be arrested and held in prison until I sign the proposed transcript of a full confession of my guilt ... I signed everything they demanded of me.” “Having been completely deprived of sleep, at the interrogations I could only hear the stories of the investigator about my crime that had been dreamt up by someone, and I could only cry.”<sup>2</sup> One can assume that during the “re-investigation,” these people did not tell the entire truth of their activity, since they knew that the legal system under Khrushchev still considered illegal anti-Stalinist activity from thirty years ago to be a criminal act.

The character of the charges made against those arrested can be seen in the testimony by one of the prisoners recorded in the case about how she had “informed Lifshits in a counter-revolutionary spirit about the course of collectivization in Ukraine.” This “counter-revolutionary spirit” consisted in the fact that she “thought that, perhaps, measures were possible that would have prevented famine and the victims that accompanied the process of collectivization.” The “case” also contained testimony that the illegal Trotskyist group intended to “cleanse Leninism of Stalin’s socialism.”<sup>3</sup>

One of the goals which Stalin and the OGPU pursued in organizing this case was, evidently, to put



pressure on Rakovsky, who was in exile for his seventh year and was stubbornly refusing to capitulate. Although Rakovsky, according to material from the investigation, was listed as the organizer of the “All-Union Trotskyist Center,” he not only was not arrested, but in 1934 was returned from exile. After announcing his break from the opposition, he was appointed head-manager of education facilities under the People’s Commissariat of Health of the RSFSR, and in 1935 he was re-admitted to the party.

Altogether, thirty-nine people were prosecuted in the case of the “illegal Trotskyist center,” the majority of whom were sentenced to imprisonment or to exile for two to five years. In 1937–1938, many of them were subjected to re-investigation; as a result, they were shot or sentenced to new terms of imprisonment in the camps. Those who survived and were set free after serving their terms were repeatedly subjected to repression in subsequent years.

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[1.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1990, № 12, pp. 87–88.

[2.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 91–92.

[3.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 90.

# 44. The Politics of Carrot and Stick

Having begun a new series of reprisals against former oppositionists, Stalin simultaneously continued to carry out his policies as the “great administrator of doses.” In May 1933, he allowed Zinoviev and Kamenev to return to Moscow after the publication in *Pravda* of their repentance for “discrediting the leader,” and for “the erroneous and sometimes criminal nature of their behavior.”<sup>1</sup> At the end of 1933, Zinoviev and Kamenev were readmitted to the party. Even before that, Kamenev had been appointed head of the “Academia” publishing house, and in May 1934, organizer and director of the Institute of World Literature within the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Zinoviev was included in the editorial board of the journal *Bolshevik*, and appointed member of the executive board of the Tsentrosoiuz [Central Union].

In commenting on the second capitulation by Zinoviev and Kamenev, Trotsky wrote:

“They capitulated back in January 1928. But to whom? To an anonymous bureaucracy that goes by the name of the party. Now such a capitulation has lost any value. One must acknowledge Stalin’s infallibility in order to have the right to live and breathe politically. ... Zinoviev and Kamenev ‘acknowledged,’ that is, they have sunk to the bottom once and for all. Their personal fate is profoundly tragic. When a future historian wants to demonstrate how ruthlessly the epochs of great upheavals drain people, he will give the example of Zinoviev and Kamenev.”<sup>2</sup>



*On the Lenin mausoleum: Ordzhonikidze, Stalin, Dimitrov,  
Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Yaroslavsky, Kalinin.*

Having passed through this new round of political and moral degeneration, Kamenev and Zinoviev placed articles in *Pravda* and other publications glorifying Stalin’s “far-sightedness and wisdom.” Radek displayed even greater zeal in panegyrics to Stalin; on 1 January 1934 he published in *Izvestiia* a lengthy article, “Architect of Socialist Society,” soon republished as a pamphlet and released in enormous numbers. In today’s terms, this was a “futurolological” pamphlet. It was written in the form of a lecture “from a history course on the victory of socialism,” which would be given on the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution in a “school of interplanetary communications.” The

future historian, as was clear from Radek's article, would begin to describe Soviet reality of the 1930s with the following words:

"Stalin was standing in a grey soldier's overcoat on the Lenin mausoleum, surrounded by his closest comrades, Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Kalinin, and Ordzhonikidze. His calm eyes looked in a thoughtful mood at the hundreds of thousands of proletarians passing by Lenin's sarcophagus with the confident strides of the forward detachments of future vanquishers of the capitalist world. ... Waves of love and trust swept toward the compact figure of our leader, calm as a rock; these were waves of certainty that there, on the Lenin mausoleum, had gathered the general staff of the future victorious world revolution."<sup>3</sup>

Bukharin conducted himself in a similar manner, when, we must assume, he was being fully sincere in February 1937 in describing the evolution of his views and behavior. Naming the years of 1928 to 1930 as "the period of the rise of the right deviation and the struggle against the party," he wrote that the following period (from 1930 to 1932) was for him "a period of overcoming my former views and mistakes, of overcoming my struggle against the party." During this period, "certain elements of ambivalence" remained in his mind, but after passage of the legislation about Soviet trade, "everything became absolutely clear." By 1932, he was already assuring Slepkov that "the party leadership has shown its great maneuverability" and that they "must without any reservations work fervently with the party." When he learned of the arrest of his followers, he decided that the "youngsters' had deceived him, broken away and gone their own way." From this moment on,

"former ties, even personal ones, have broken off: I have openly condemned the younger ones politically, and physically they, too, have been very distant. Some of them are in prison, others are working outside Moscow; there has been contact with Tomsy and Rykov ever more rarely; in 1934, almost not at all. In 1935, not once. In 1936, not once. This is a period of the most cordial and unrestrained work with the party, of the rapid growth of profound respect and love for the party leadership — in place of the rancor of the earlier period. ... In this period, there has not been even the slightest sign of duplicity in my attitude toward the party and the party leadership. ... My entire development has proceeded toward overcoming all the ambiguities and vestiges of the old, and for a long time, neither in my thoughts, nor in my actions, have there been any traces of my former terrible legacy."<sup>4</sup>

However, despite the humble expressions of devotion from his former opponents, and the unrestrained praise around his name in official propaganda, Stalin still did not feel that his absolute power was irreversible. The emergence of new oppositions that resorted to illegal methods of struggle — the only ones now possible — showed that by no means all communists were inclined to accept unquestioningly the adventuristic experiments that he was conducting on the party and the nation. As A. Avtorkhanov correctly notes:

"The opposition against Stalin resembled that legendary hydra in ancient Greek mythology, where new heads grew out to replace each one that had been severed. ... Moreover, every new opposition, being in its composition and ideology a communist opposition, reflected to a certain degree the aspirations of broad masses of the people."<sup>5</sup>

Stalin's familiarity with the "Riutin platform"; with letters from the USSR published in the *Bulletin of the Opposition*; with investigation material and agents' reports from the GPU, recording the activity and moods of old and new opposition groups — all this showed that not only many former oppositionists were sharply against his policy, but even many communists who had not participated in the 1920s in any oppositions, and who had voted "unanimously" at official party meetings.

Stalin was particularly disturbed by the circumstance that a significant portion of the party's intellectual forces continued to develop from among former oppositionists. Carefully following the fate of his recent open enemies, at the beginning of the 1930s, he expressed his disgruntlement to Khrushchev: "How has it come to be that the Trotskyists and rightists have received privileges? The Central Committee doesn't trust them, and has removed them from party posts, and now they have rushed into places of higher learning. Now many of them have already finished their education, and are moving beyond that, into science..." He then even named a few people as examples.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. *Pravda*, 20 May 1933.

<sup>2</sup>. *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1933, № 35, p. 24 [Cf. "Zinoviev and Kamenev Capitulate Again," *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932–33)*, pp. 242–243].

<sup>3</sup>. Karl Radek, *Zodchii sotsialisticheskogo obshchestva*, M., 1934, pp. 31–32.

<sup>4</sup>. *Voprosy istorii*, 1992, № 2–3, pp. 31–32.

<sup>5</sup>. A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiya vlasti*, pp. 266, 279.

<sup>6</sup>. *Voprosy istorii*, 1990, № 3, p. 68.



# 45. Purging the Party

In order to free the party from people who were capable of creating a mass base of resistance against the ruling clique, Stalin conducted mass purges of the party. The first general purge after Lenin's death was conducted in 1929–1930, in accordance with a resolution of the Sixteenth Conference of the VKP(b) in April 1929, which stated that the purge should “make the party more homogeneous, and ruthlessly cast out from the ranks of the party all elements alien to it, harmful to its success, and indifferent to its struggle ... exposing hidden Trotskyists ... and supporters of other anti-party groups and cleansing the party of them.”<sup>1</sup> During this purge, 10.2 percent of the party membership was expelled, and 1.3 percent voluntarily left the party.<sup>2</sup>

The very announcement of this purge was a violation of party statutes, according to which a purge should be announced in the resolution of a party congress. The decree of the conference set the goal of completing it precisely by the time the upcoming Sixteenth Congress opened in June 1930. Proceeding parallel with the purge was a massive acceptance into the party of new members. In a report to the Sixteenth Congress, Stalin named as a great achievement “the declarations of workers about the entry into the party of whole workshops and factories, the growth of the number of party members in the interval between the Fifteenth Congress and the Sixteenth by more than 600,000 people, and the entry into the party during just the first quarter of this year of 200,000 new members.”<sup>3</sup> The accelerated increase in party members continued after the Sixteenth Congress as well.

But even a party that had been renovated in this way had not become “monolithic” enough to guarantee its unquestioning obedience to Stalin. Therefore, two and a half years after the completion of the purge of 1929–1930, a new general purge of the party was announced. The distinctive feature this time was that, before it was completed, acceptance of candidate-members and transfer to full membership was halted. The Central Committee's resolution to conduct the purge throughout 1933 was passed on 10 December 1932, and confirmed by the January Plenum of the CC and CCC, which decreed: “to organize the matter of purging the party in such a way as to guarantee iron proletarian discipline in the party and to cleanse the party ranks of all unreliable, unstable, and mercenary elements.”<sup>4</sup>

Assigned to the categories subject to the purge, by decree of the CC and CCC on 28 April 1933, were the following, in particular: “Double-dealers, living by deceiving the party, concealing from it their actual aspirations, and under the cover of a dishonest vow of ‘loyalty’ to the party, trying in fact to disrupt party policy.” Also included were “open and concealed violators of the iron discipline of the party and state; people not fulfilling decisions of the party and government; those sowing doubt and discrediting the decisions and plans set by the party by chattering about how they were ‘unreal’ and ‘unfeasible.’”<sup>5</sup> According to the spirit and letter of these statutes, the party should have driven out

anyone who expressed doubt about the correctness, not only of the “general line,” but even of various practical undertakings of the Stalin leadership.

One more innovation of the given purge was the violation of the party statute, according to which members of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, as having been elected by the party congress, were not subject to being purged. In a decree of 28 April 1933, an important provision was made, allowing the possibility of conducting a purge of Central Committee members “in an instance where a motivating statement is submitted by one or another party meeting or a separate group of party members.”<sup>6</sup> Such statements were not slow in coming from primary organizations in those establishments where former leaders of the “right deviationists” were working.

A statement from the secretary of the party cell at the People’s Commissariat of Communications, headed by Rykov, proposed to subject him to a purge, since he “still has not fully disarmed.” At a meeting of the cell at the Commissariat, Rykov gave two lengthy speeches in which he declared that “the struggle with me, in particular, and with the right deviation, is one of the major achievements of today’s leadership of the CC and, especially, and above all, of comrade Stalin.”<sup>7</sup> Rykov saw the danger of his position in 1928–1929 to consist in the fact that “both my name, and my position, were made the center of attraction (about which I spoke at one of the congresses) in a whole number of instances for elements who were hostile to Soviet power.”<sup>8</sup>

In speaking about the subsequent opposition groupings, Rykov declared that several of them “hoped, several were certain, that under the right circumstances I would move to their side”; his silence about these groupings “gave grounds to believe that I perhaps remained on my old position.” As proof that he had corrected this recurrent “mistake,” Rykov listed his many speeches over the last year in which he had criticized the “rightist danger” and the new anti-Stalin groupings. Rykov expressed the desire that “from my speech, on the experience of my mistakes, comrades will learn to fight ever more strongly and more consistently against the right deviation in the ranks of our party.”<sup>9</sup>

As for his work at the Commissariat of Communications, Rykov claimed that, before his arrival at the Commissariat, the latter had “virtually been in the hands of saboteurs and various enemies of Soviet power.” Among his accomplishments he named the decree of the Sovnarkom, passed on his initiative, according to which “crimes along lines of communication are the equivalent to crimes against socialist property.” As for his shortcomings — “the organs of communication were littered with alien elements.”<sup>10</sup>

Even a speech of this kind, however, was declared by those participating in the discussion to be “insufficiently self-critical.” Rykov was blamed for the fact that he had not acknowledged “the internal political connection” between his position of 1928–1929 and his earlier mistakes, starting in 1911. In confirmation of the “slowness” with which Rykov was overcoming his mistakes, speakers referred to the fact that in two of his recent speeches, he had not uttered the mandatory ritual words in praise of Stalin. The majority of the speeches at the meeting ended with the conclusion that Rykov had not justified the trust placed in him by the Sixteenth Congress that had elected him to the Central Committee.

The atmosphere of the meeting was depicted in the report by the chairman of the “cleansing” commission at the People’s Commissariat to the *oblast* purge commission. It stated that Rykov had “greatly softened the description” of his mistakes, and no less than half of the meeting’s participants, during contributions by people criticizing Rykov, “had tried in every way to confuse the speakers. In contrast, when comrade Rykov in his speeches manages to deliver some kind of witticism, this part of the audience broke out into wild applause.” The informer did not forget to mention his own merits: as he was closing the meeting, he pointed out that this “frenzied applause directed at comrade Rykov for his witty remarks, and the hissing at comrades who were trying seriously, in a business-like manner, to bring to light the shortcomings of the work at the People’s Commissariat, reveal the truly anti-party and anti-Soviet physiognomy of their authors.”<sup>11</sup>

The commission’s resolution about the results of the individual purging of Rykov pointed to his “mistakes,” expressed in the fact that, in two of his speeches, he “had remained silent about problems of the struggle for the party’s general line.” The commission decreed that it considered Rykov to have been “approved,” but in saying so, “asked the Central Commission on the Purge and the Central Committee of the VKP(b) to inform the Seventeenth Party Congress that comrade Rykov, in his practical and party work, still has not shown to a sufficient degree that he has overcome his right-opportunist mistakes.”<sup>12</sup>

The purge of Bukharin went more successfully, basically because he delivered a more shameful and self-abasing speech. He declared his “full and unconditional solidarity” with the fact that the party organization had demanded his “additional verification,” since he had committed “a whole series of the most serious mistakes.” Giving a detailed list of these “mistakes,” Bukharin asserted that at the end of the 1920s, his group had turned into “a mouthpiece for all forces who were resisting the onslaught of the unfolding socialist offensive.” Bukharin referred to the issues that he had raised about the party regime, “which had been accompanied by personal attacks and so forth on the most outstanding and greatest leaders of our party.” He called them the “organizational reflex ... of petty-bourgeois vacillations.” He then declared that now he understood that the victory of socialist construction required “absolute unity in thought and action,” “a warlike order within the country” and a party “with a completely iron discipline,” which is “capable of guiding the masses with an iron hand.” Bukharin saw the establishment of such a party regime as the achievement of Stalin’s leadership, which had “historically grown and been forged not on some kind of organizational cunning, but it had been forged, grown and won its historical place by means of a profoundly principled line.”<sup>13</sup>

Among his particularly serious mistakes, Bukharin included “dishonest instructions” he gave to “a whole number of comrades, who then, after tearing themselves away from my leadership, and once again to a significant degree this is my fault because I cultivated democratism with them, have now stooped to doing the kind of things that you know about.” (He had in mind the fate of the “Bukharin school,” the majority of whose participants were then in the GPU’s torture chambers – *V. R.*). “I have long ago left this behind, it is very unpleasant for me to remember all of this, — I have separated

myself from all this,” Bukharin added to this passage.<sup>14</sup> He recalled that, at the Seventeenth Party Conference and January Plenum of the Central Committee in 1933, he had taken “the blame for those people who had sunk to joining counter-revolutionary groupings. That would be Slepkov, Aikhenvald, Maretsky, Astrov, and others. I consider myself not to be to blame for what they have been doing recently, but I was the first to ‘infect’ them when right opportunism was born.

“My second mistake was that I was overly familiar with them, and then they spit on me and removed themselves from under my influence and embarked on counter-revolutionary actions behind my back. I consider it my duty to condemn them in the most decisive manner and fully endorse those measures which have been undertaken by the CC of the VKP(b).”<sup>15</sup> In demonstrating that he had fully overcome his previous “democratism,” Bukharin declared that “we must smash the skulls of not only the kulaks, but of any accomplice they have.”<sup>16</sup>

The party cell of the United State Publishing Houses (OGIZ), headed by Tomsy, met for three days to make a statement about his individual purge. On the first day, as the chairman of the purge commission at OGIZ reported, it had become clear that a significant portion of the bureau and party cell “were under Tomsy’s influence,” and had a favorable assessment of his work. In his speech, therefore, Tomsy reduced his errors to just one issue: he “had not spoken for a long time at party meetings.” Only after the commission had given “guidance to the discussions,” they obtained four statements, motivated by individuals or groups that proposed the organization of Tomsy’s individual purge. In these statements, he was faulted for “not having subjected to strong criticism his struggle with the party that had lasted for years.” He had also “harmed the party too much to make up for his guilt before the party through his behavior and his work.” In addition, Tomsy was blamed for the fact that during his work at OGIZ, “he had bought up ideologically uneven manuscripts” and allowed “ideological rubbish” to slip through.<sup>17</sup>

At his “personal purge,” Tomsy conducted himself with more dignity than Bukharin and Rykov, and even tried to defend A. P. Smirnov, who shortly before had been removed from the Central Committee. The end result of the purge was that he and the other leaders of the “rightists” were reported to have successfully made it through.

In the course of the purge of 1933, from among the former leaders of opposition groupings, the only ones “removed by the purge” turned out to be Aleksandr Shliapnikov and Sergei Medvedev, organizers of the “Workers’ Opposition” of 1920–1922. After the decision of the party cell of Gosplan to expel Shliapnikov “for having completely broken from Bolshevism,” he sent a letter to Stalin in which he protested that “an atmosphere of sensation and petty slander has been created around me, and in the press they have already made me a ‘complete double-dealer.’” Shliapnikov reported that the commission had not allowed the postponement of his purge despite his worsening deafness. Therefore he was forced to appear at the meeting in poor health, where he wasn’t even able to hear the accusations against him, and therefore refute the “self-seekers ... who have slandered me.” In concluding the letter, Shliapnikov asked [Stalin] “to put an end to the malicious insults made against me and to oblige the purge commission to present to me the facts about my double-dealing.”



Stalin redirected this letter to the Central Purge Commission. Here, during review of his appeal, Shliapnikov had to listen to new insults that were all the more abusive, since Nikolai Yezhov, who had been raised for several years in Shliapnikov's family, delivered a condescending lecture to him. "In bewilderment, Shliapnikov is now asking everyone — what are his crimes?" said Yezhov.

"You, Shliapnikov, have been shown exceptional patience by the party. You are an old member of the party, a worker, a cultured worker. The party has expended a great deal on your education. You have also put in some hard work. You write books that are still not accessible to many workers. And the party has always been patient with you, thinking that Shliapnikov will improve.

"You have always abused this patience shown by the party. All your knowledge and abilities, on which no small amount of party effort and your own effort have been spent, have been used by you for the last fifteen years only to fight against the party. The party's patience is exceptional and fully refutes your own assertions about the regime in the party and so forth, about which you have constantly spoken and written ... If we now leave Shliapnikov in the party, not a single member of the party will understand this."<sup>18</sup>



*Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov*  
(1895–1940)

Before affirming the decision to expel Shliapnikov from the party, debates in the commission unfolded only on whether to expel him for "the old" — participation in the Workers' Opposition — or for "the new" — that he had not spoken out against the Trotskyists and had "morally degenerated." The result of the "discussion" was that it was decided to expel him for both "the old" and "the new." Within this, charges of "degeneration" amounted to the fact that, while he was chairman of a housing cooperative, Shliapnikov had spoken at a trial in defense of a non-party member of the cooperative, into whose apartment, according to an order signed by Kaganovich, and in violation of the law, an official in the apparatus of the party's Moscow Committee had moved.

Of the 1,916,500 members and candidate-members of the party who went through the purge process, 18.3 percent were expelled. In total, from 1921 through 1933, as a result of purges, about a million members and candidate-members of the party were expelled or voluntarily quit (about one-tenth of those expelled were later reinstated).<sup>19</sup> If one subtracts from this number the 219,000 expelled or who withdrew in the period of the general purge in 1921, then it turns out that around 800,000 people were driven from the party in the course of Stalin's purges alone, up until the beginning of 1934.

In describing the contrasting functions and methods of party purges in the first years of the revolution versus the times of Stalin's dictatorship, Trotsky wrote:

"Superficially, one and the same party ... at the beginning of Soviet power and ten years later, uses one and the same methods in the name of one and the same goals: to preserve its political purity and its unity. In actual fact, the role of the party and the role of the purges have changed radically. In the first period of Soviet power, the old revolutionary party was purged of careerists; in accordance with this, the committees (purge commissions — *V. R.*) were made up of old revolutionary workers.

Thrown overboard were seekers of adventure, careerists, or simply charlatans, who tried in rather large numbers to attach themselves to the regime. The purges of recent years, in contrast, are directed fully and completely against the old revolutionary party. The organizers of the purges are the most bureaucratic and, according to their type, the most inferior elements of the party. The victims of the purge are the most loyal elements, devoted to revolutionary traditions, and primarily its (the party's – *V. R.*) older revolutionary generations. Whereas in the first period the proletarian party cleansed itself of its worst elements and of bourgeois elements, now the petty-bourgeois bureaucracy is cleansing itself of genuinely revolutionary, proletarian elements. The social meaning of the purges has radically changed, but this change is being covered over by a united party.”<sup>20</sup>

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1. *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh*, vol 4, pp. 489–490.
2. E. Yaroslavsky, “Chistka partii,” *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*, vol. 61, 1934, p. 654.
3. I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 12, p. 344.
4. *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh*, vol. 6, p. 32.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 46–47.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
7. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1991, № 6, pp. 81, 88.
8. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1991, № 7, p. 88.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 88–91.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 95.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 96–97.
13. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1991, № 3, p. 40.
14. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1991, № 1, pp. 85–86.
15. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1991, № 3, p. 54.
16. *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1991, № 1, p. 88.
17. *Kentavr*, 1992, № 5–6, pp. 108–113.
18. *Reabilitatsiia*, pp. 114–116.
19. *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*, vol. 61, p. 655.
20. L. D. Trotskii, *Stalin*, vol. 2, pp. 214–215.

# 46. The Totalitarian Regime and Its “Theoretical” Basis

In a sense, a parallel, along state lines, to the party purge was the restoration in the country of the passport system in 1933. In the first years of the revolution, legislative acts were passed forbidding the requirement that citizens show their passports or other residence forms. Passports were replaced by identity papers, possession of which was considered the right, but not the obligation, of the citizen. This situation was abruptly changed by the decree of the Central Executive Committee and Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR, “On the Establishment of a Unified Passport System for the USSR and the Obligatory Registration of Passports.”

The new legislation about passports pursued, first of all, the goal of tying peasants to the collective farms, since passports were not given out to inhabitants of rural areas. Secondly, it set the goal of keeping constant track of “hostile class elements,” for which a point on social origin was included in the passport. Many former nobles, capitalists and other *lishentsy* (i.e., people deprived of voting rights), as well as prisoners who had been set free, were henceforth deprived of the right to receive a passport or a residency permit in major cities. “The authorities use the passport system,” reported a correspondent of the *Bulletin of the Opposition*, “primarily to rid Moscow of all undesirable or even slightly suspicious elements in a political sense, including all Left Oppositionists who at various times had repented.”<sup>1</sup> Finally, the passport system facilitated the constant surveillance of such “suspicious elements.”



*Viacheslav Rudolfovich Menzhinsky*  
(1874–1934)



*Genrikh Grigorievich Yagoda*  
(1891–1938)

At the beginning of the 1930s, the political police (GPU) had risen above the party once and for all, and had turned into Stalin's personal instrument. Even in 1930, this is the way that Trotsky described the radical change in the functions and methods of this body's activity:

“During the years of the Civil War, the Cheka carried out harsh work. But this work was conducted under the control of the party. Hundreds of times from within the party, protests were raised; there were declarations, and demands for an explanation regarding one sentence or another. The Cheka was headed by Dzerzhinsky, a man of high moral force. He answered to the Politburo, members of which had their own opinion on all questions and could defend them. ... Now the GPU is headed by Menzhinsky, not a man, but the shadow of a man. The main role in the GPU is played by Yagoda, a miserable careerist who tied his fate to the fate of Stalin and who is prepared to carry out, without serious thought or discussion, any of the latter's personal instructions.”<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of the 1930s, the lead article in the handwritten journal of the prisoners at the Verkhneural'sk political isolator, *The Militant Bolshevik*, stated:

“The GPU has finally been legalized as the main organ controlling the party. No post, no position in the country or party, no services rendered, either past or present, can save a man from a common lot if he has dared to violate the rules of the state of siege.”<sup>3</sup>

Stalin tried to give a “theoretical” justification for the totalitarian-police regime created in the country in the concluding section of his speech at the January 1933 Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission. The title of that section of the speech was “Results of the Five-Year Plan in Four Years in the Realm of Fighting Against the Remnants of Hostile Classes.” In it, Stalin declared that “the last remnants of dying classes” ... “have been chucked out,” as a result of which they “have crawled away” into all enterprises and establishments throughout the country, “where they have become the organizers, not only of sabotage, but also of mass theft and the embezzlement of social property.”<sup>4</sup> In this way, the stealing, which had become widespread as a result of the impoverishment of the overwhelming mass of the population, was explained by the machinations of “the last remnants of dying classes.”

These “remnants” or “former people,” as Stalin asserted, could not change anything in the present situation in the USSR. “They are too weak and powerless to withstand the undertaking of Soviet power.” Nevertheless they will increase their resistance with the growth of the might of the Soviet state, and “on that soil, ... the fragments of counter-revolutionary elements from the Trotskyists and right deviationists ... might come alive and begin to stir. This, of course, does not frighten us.” Despite these assurances of the helplessness of the “remnants” and “fragments,” Stalin declared that a maximum increase of state power was necessary in order to “scatter the dust” of these “remnants” and “smash their thieving machinations.”<sup>5</sup>

In the article, “Problems of the Soviet Regime (The Theory of Degeneration and the Degeneration of Theory),” Trotsky turned attention primarily to the logical absurdity of all this sophistry coming from Stalin. He wrote:

“If only ‘former people’ remain from former classes, if they are too weak to ‘change something (!) in the situation of the USSR,’ then what should have flowed from this is the extinguishing of the class struggle and the softening of the regime. ... Why introduce a regime of terror against the party and the proletariat if the issue at hand is only powerless fragments,



incapable of ‘changing something in the USSR?’ All this piling up of confusion, passing into out-and-out nonsense, is the result of the inability to disclose the truth.”<sup>6</sup>

In revealing the striking contrast between the situation in the party immediately after the revolution and under Stalin’s regime, Trotsky recalled that, in the years of the Civil War, when the old ruling classes fought with arms in hand, when they were actively supported by the imperialists of the entire world, open discussions were held in the party over the sharpest problems: the Brest Peace, methods of organizing the Red Army, the trade unions, the composition of the Central Committee, nationality policy, and so forth. Why was it that now, after the rout of the exploiting classes,

“there can be no discussions allowed about the problems of the tempos of industrialization and collectivization, about the relationship between heavy and light industry, or about the policy of a united front in Germany? Why is it that any member of the party who demands the convening of the next party congress, in accordance with party statutes, would be immediately expelled and subject to repression? Why is it that any communist who expresses aloud any doubt about Stalin’s infallibility would be immediately arrested? What is the source of such a terrible, monstrous and unbearable tension in the political regime?”<sup>7</sup>

Trotsky wrote that, in full contradiction of Marxist doctrine — according to which, to the extent that socialist construction is successful, the dictatorship of the proletariat should turn into a “semi-state” and wither away, i.e., be replaced by a truly equitable and common participation of the entire population in managing society — not only the masses, but even the ruling party had been barred from such management. Along with this, “the Stalinists not only do not dare to claim that the dictatorship has assumed more democratic forms in recent years; on the contrary, they tirelessly try to prove the need to further intensify the methods of state violence.”<sup>8</sup>

The actual reasons for the unceasing intensification of state compulsion, that had grown into a personal terroristic dictatorship, lie in the threatening growth of popular discontent over Stalin’s policy, which had taken the form of out-and-out crimes directed against the people. In uncovering the social and economic reasons and inner logic of this process, Trotsky wrote:

“Exaggerated and uncoordinated industrialization undermined the foundations of agriculture. ... Experience soon showed that the collectivization of despair is not yet socialist collectivization. The further fall of agriculture struck a blow at industry. To support unfeasible and uncoordinated tempos required increased pressure on the proletariat. Having freed themselves from the material control of the mass consumer (for such control, Trotsky had in mind primarily the market – *V. R.*) and from the political control of the producer, industry assumed a super-social, i.e., bureaucratic character. As a result it proved incapable of satisfying human wants even to the degree that less developed capitalist industry satisfied them. Agriculture responded to the impotent cities with a war of attrition. Under the eternal burden of a lack of correspondence between the strain of their labor efforts and the worsening conditions of existence, the workers, collective farmers and individual farmers lose interest in their labor and are filled with irritation against the state. From this, and precisely from this, and not from the malicious will of the ‘fragments,’ flows the need to introduce compulsion in all the cells of economic life (increase in the power of the director, legislation against absenteeism, death penalty for the theft of kolkhoz property by collective farmers, military measures for sowing and for harvesting, compulsory lending of horses to the kolkhozes by individual peasants, the passport system, political departments in the collective-farm villages, and so forth and so on).”<sup>9</sup>

Trotsky considered the main reason behind the rise of the bureaucratic-totalitarian regime to be the circumstance that, in the country that had gone through the October Revolution, the privileges of the minority could be guarded only by means of ruthless violence against the masses. The preservation of this regime ineluctably gave rise to gigantic economic costs. If Soviet democracy was a vital

requirement of the healthy development of a planned economy, then the bureaucratic methods of management inevitably “concealed within themselves tragic economic surprises.”<sup>[10](#)</sup>

The results of the first Five-Year Plan and the massive famine that befell the country toward its end were just such “tragic surprises.”

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- [1.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1933, № 33, p. 25.
  - [2.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1930, № 9, p. 8 [Cf. “Jakob Blumkin Shot by the Stalinists,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930)*, p. 22].
  - [3.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1932, № 27, p. 13.
  - [4.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13, pp. 207–208 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, pp. 212].
  - [5.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 210, 211–212 [*Ibid.*, pp. 212, 215–216].
  - [6.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1933, № 34, p. 4 [Cf. “The Theory of Degeneration and the Degeneration of Theory,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932–33)*, pp. 221–222].
  - [7.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 3 [*Ibid.*, p. 219].
  - [8.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 2 [*Ibid.*, p. 218].
  - [9.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 6 [*Ibid.*, pp. 224–225].
  - [10.](#) *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1932, № 27, p. 10.

# 47. Results of the First Five-Year Plan

As early as 1931, Trotsky warned: “given incorrect planning and, what is more important, incorrect adjustment of the plan during its fulfillment, a crisis might develop toward the very end of the Five-Year Plan that will create insurmountable difficulties for implementing and developing its doubtless successes.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1932, the actual increase in industrial production (14.7 percent) turned out to be less than half of what had been foreseen according to the annual plan (32 percent). After that, the publication of statistical data was sharply curtailed in the USSR. At the beginning of 1933, Stalin signed a secret telegram:

“To prohibit all departments, republics and regions, prior to the release of the official publication of the Gosplan of the USSR about the results of fulfilling the first Five-Year Plan, from publishing any other summarizing works, both informational and sectoral or regional, so that, after the official publication of the results of the Five-Year Plan, all summary works can only be published with permission of the Gosplan of the USSR.”<sup>2</sup>

By falsifying statistical data, Stalin announced at the January 1933 Central Committee plenum that the Five-Year Plan had been fulfilled in four years and three months. To confirm this claim, he stated that the Five-Year Plan’s overall volume of industrial production had supposedly been fulfilled by 93.7 percent, while that of heavy industry by 108 percent. However, these were only gross value indicators, not taking into account the growth of wholesale prices for industrial production.

Of course, significant achievements were made during the years of the Five-Year Plan in the sphere of industrialization. Fifteen hundred major enterprises were built and whole branches of industry were created that had not existed in Tsarist Russia: machine-building, automobile manufacturing, tractor production, and both the chemical and aviation industries. Major industrial centers arose in former remote national areas of Tsarist Russia. Work was begun on a second fuel and metallurgical base in the Urals and Siberia.

However, given all these achievements, even according to the figures of gross output (in rubles), the goals of the Five-Year Plan, despite Stalin’s claims, had not been met. In the first Five-Year Plan, the output of industrial production had doubled, but in group “A”<sup>3</sup> — by 2.7 times, while the planned goals were correspondingly 2.8 and 3.3 times. Of particular significance was the non-fulfillment of the plan’s goals for group “B”: the production of consumer items increased by 56 percent as opposed to the 2.4 times set by the Five-Year Plan. But even these figures about the results of the first Five-Year Plan were obtained by means of statistical manipulation; for instance, the use of “repeated accounting,” in which the value of half-finished products was counted when evaluating the work of plants producing both the finished product, and the partially-finished. Similar manipulations would be characteristic of Soviet accounting in all subsequent years.

In the first Five-Year Plan, the tempos of annual growth for twenty of the most important kinds of industrial production were almost three times lower than in 1922–1928. In addition, they fell in

comparison not only with the restoration period (1921–1925), but also with the following two years, when a slow transition to the country's industrialization was taking place. For instance, the average annual tempos of growth in coal production were 39.9 percent in 1926–1927, but in the years of the first Five-Year Plan, about 15 percent; the average yearly growth of steel production — 37.6 percent and 8.2 percent; of cement — 34.4 percent and 17.1 percent. Overall, the average annual growth of the most important types of industrial production in the years of the first Five-Year Plan amounted to 11.9 percent, as opposed to the planned goal of 29.1 percent. Thus, the fulfillment of the planning goals, according to this indicator, reached only 41 percent.

The scale of the non-fulfillment of the goals set for the first Five-Year Plan emerges even more starkly, when one compares the initial figures set for the last year of the Five-Year Plan by the Sixteenth Conference and Fifth Congress of Soviets in 1929 (not to mention the increased goals set by the Sixteenth Congress in 1930), with the figures that were actually achieved in 1932. Instead of 22 billion kilowatt-hours of electric energy, 13.5 billion kilowatt-hours were produced; instead of 75 million tons of coal, 64.4 million tons; instead of 10 million tons of iron, 6.2 million tons; instead of 8 million tons of mineral fertilizers, 0.3 million tons; instead of 10.4 million tons of steel, 5.9 million tons; instead of 8 million tons of rolled steel, 4.4 million tons. An enormous lagging behind the planned goals was characteristic of machine-building branches: 23.9 thousand automobiles were produced in 1932, against 100 thousand according to the plan; 48.9 thousand tractors, against 53 thousand; combines — 10 thousand against 40 thousand, according to the increased goal. The planned goals for the basic branches of group “A” were reached only in 1933–1935, and the elevated goals set in 1930 (17 million tons of iron, 170 thousand tractors and 200 thousand automobiles), were correspondingly reached in 1950, 1956 and 1957. Only in one branch — oil production — were figures reached in 1932 that were close to the figures of the “optimal” variant of the Five-Year Plan (21.4 and 22 million tons), but even they were more than two times lower than the elevated planned targets.

Matters were much worse in the fulfillment of the planned goals in group “B” of industry. In 1932, 2,694 million meters of cotton textiles were produced, instead of 4,700 million meters targeted by the plan at the end of the Five-Year Plan; for woolen cloth — 88.7 million meters instead of 270 million meters; for granulated sugar — 828 thousand tons instead of 2,600 thousand tons. The figures set for 1932 for these types of industrial production were met correspondingly in 1954, 1957 and 1951.

The output of basic types of production in light industry in 1932 was approximately the same as in 1928, but production in the food industry was substantially lower than in 1928. This was explained by the catastrophic state of agriculture toward the close of the first Five-Year Plan. The total yield of cereals in 1932 was 69.9 million tons against 73.3 million tons in 1928; the production of meat — correspondingly 2.8 million tons against 4.9 million tons; of milk, 20.6 million tons against 31 million; of eggs, 4.4 billion items versus 10.8 billion; of wool, 69 thousand tons against 182 thousand. The most important indicators of agricultural production continued to fall in 1933 as well. Over 1929–1933, the production of meat, milk and eggs shrank correspondingly by two, one and a



half, and three times; the production of sugar by 39 percent. Instead of the planned growth of agricultural production by 1.5 times between 1929 and 1933, in 1933 its production amounted to less than two-thirds of the level of 1929 and of 1913.

According to the Five-Year Plan, the crop yield of basic agricultural produce should have risen by 35 percent in comparison with 1928. In fact, the yield of cereal crops reached 7 million centners [100 kilograms] per hectare in 1932, as opposed to 7.9 million centners in 1928; of cotton — 5.9 million centners against 8.5 million; of sugar beets — 43 million centners versus 132 million; of sunflower — 2.1 million centners versus 5.4 million; of flax — 2 million as opposed to 2.4 million; potatoes — 71 million centners versus 82 million; vegetables — 79 million centners against 132 million.

The depletion of the productive forces in the countryside was most starkly shown in the sharp reduction of the livestock population. This occurred due not only to the self-destruction of livestock by the peasants who joined the collective farms, but also to the establishment of unachievable norms in cattle-breeding production. Warnings by local officials about the inevitable decrease in livestock were crudely ignored and condemned by higher bodies. For instance, a decree by the bureau of the Kazakh kraikom [area committee], adopted in 1931, stated: “The kraikom firmly condemns the tendencies of various regions and officials to not fulfill the plans and to weaken the tempos of meat procurement ... under the cover of conversations about reducing the herd, or about the need to preserve the productive livestock.”<sup>4</sup>

The Five-Year Plan envisioned an increase in livestock by 20 to 30 percent. Instead of this, the number of horned livestock decreased from 60.1 million heads in 1928 to 33.5 million in 1933; included in this are cattle, from 29.3 million to 19.4 million; pigs from 22 million to 9.9 million; sheep and goats from 107 million to 37.3 million; and horses from 32.1 million to 14.9 million (in 1935). Even during the period of the war and post-war devastation (1941–1946), the number of horned cattle and oxen only decreased by seven million heads, i.e., four times less than during the years of collectivization.

The livestock that survived was basically located either in personal auxiliary farms of the collective farmers, or owned by individual farmers. At the end of 1932, the collective farms had only 2.6 millions cows, and even at the beginning of 1941 — only 5.7 million out of an overall livestock count of 27.8 million.

The gigantic loss of the working livestock was only made up for to an insignificant degree by tractors and other machinery. At the end of 1932, the collective farms, state farms and machine-tractor stations had a total of seventy-two thousand tractors, six thousand trucks and about ten thousand combines (in the USA, by the beginning of 1930, in agriculture there were 1.3 million tractors, around 800 thousand trucks and forty-five thousand combines). The fleet of tractors in the USSR had at its disposal a total capacity of 1.1 million horsepower, while the number of horses in the country had shrunk from 1930 through 1933 by 13.6 million.

The consequences of the enormous harm done to agriculture by forced collectivization were felt throughout the 1930s, when the livestock component of agricultural production was lower than in

1929.

The productivity of labor in industry grew during the Five-Year Plan by 41 percent, while the planning goal was 110 percent. The growth of industrial production was achieved basically due to extensive factors. The average annual number of manual and white-collar workers in the national economy doubled during the first Five-Year Plan, and in 1932 reached 22.9 million workers, instead of the 15.8 million according to the plan. The average wage also doubled (whereas the plan had set the target of its growth at 50 percent). The general wage fund grew, in this way, by a factor of four. However, real wages fell significantly, since the growth of nominal monetary wages was overridden by the growth of retail prices.



*"5 in 4" (left) and Stalin, Results of the first Five-Year Plan, 1933.*

In analyzing the results of the first Five-Year Plan, Trotsky noted that the bureaucracy freed itself, not only from political control of the masses, on whom forced industrialization had placed an unbearable burden, but also from automatic control by means of market mechanisms and a stable monetary unit. The monetary system established at the end of the NEP, once again, was radically undermined. The financial deficiencies of the plan were met with printed paper. All the sluice gates of inflation were raised. While monetary emission increased from 0.7 billion rubles at the beginning of 1925 to the relatively modest sum of 1.7 billion rubles by the beginning of 1928 (which was approximately equal to the paper currency in circulation in Tsarist Russia, without its former metallic base),<sup>5</sup> then from 1928 through 1931, the volume of money in circulation increased five times over. A consequence of this was the decrease in the purchasing power of the ruble by 60 percent and the loss of its gold content.

Trotsky assessed Stalin's declaration about the fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan in four years and three months, as an indicator that "the cynicism of the bureaucracy when it deals with statistics and public opinion knows no bounds."<sup>6</sup>

As early as October 1932, Trotsky warned that “there now can be no mention of actually completing the Five-Year Plan in four years (or to be more precise, in four years and three months).” In analyzing the data published in the Soviet press, he stressed that they “have more of a formally-statistical rather than an economic-accounting character. If the construction of a new factory is 90 percent ready, and then, in view of a clear shortage of raw materials, work is halted, then from a formally-statistical standpoint, one can record a 90 percent fulfillment of the plan. From an economic standpoint, however, the expenses incurred must simply be recorded in the loss column. An accounting of the true effectiveness (useful activity) of plants that have been built or are being built, from the standpoint of the overall state economic balance, still belongs completely to the future. But from the standpoint of naked quantity, the results, however significant they may be in themselves, are very remote from the plan’s designated goals.”<sup>7</sup>

The indicators of plan fulfillment would look even less favorable if they included a corrective coefficient for the quality of production. High tempos of industrial growth were reached as a result of the administrative pursuit of quantity, which led “to the terrifying reduction of quality; at the next stage, low quality undermines the struggle for quantity: the payment for economically irrational ‘successes’ usually exceeds many times over the value of these very successes. Every advanced worker now knows this dialectic, not from the books issued by the Communist Academy (alas! also poor production), but from the practice of his own mine, factory, railway, thermal power station, and so forth.”<sup>8</sup>

The official results of fulfilling the plan were revealed to be particularly unreliable in the realm of agriculture. The “successes” in this sphere were usually illustrated in the Soviet press by references to the number of collectivized farms and hectares. Trotsky considered these references to be an unworthy mockery of the state of agriculture, and of the relationship between town and country. In reality, the procurement of foodstuffs and agricultural staples, which had not become a matter of mutually advantageous exchange between cities and the countryside, had remained throughout the entire Five-Year Plan a “political campaign,” or a “militant crusade,” requiring each time the mobilization of the state and party apparatus. Referring to an article in *Pravda* which stated that “many collective farms are resisting the procurements, and hiding their grain,” Trotsky wrote:

“We know in a similar context what the word ‘many’ means. If the exchange between village and town is favorable, then there can be no grounds for the peasants to ‘hide their grain’; if, however, the exchange is not favorable, that is, if it is the result of forced expropriation, then *all* collective farms, and not just many, are trying to hide their grain, just as individual farmers are doing. Mandatory quotas for meat procurement now officially take on the character of a tax in kind for the peasants, with all the repressive consequences flowing from it.”<sup>9</sup>

All this served as indisputable evidence that, while superficially continuing to be fully in command, the bureaucracy in agriculture, more than anywhere else, proved to be a prisoner of its own mistakes.

The blind and short-sighted policy in the countryside, which continued to be built on ruthless repression, was the reason for the massive famine that seized the nation.

- [1.](#) *Bulletin of the Opposition*, 1931, № 23, p. 3 [Cf. “A New Zigzag and New Dangers,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1930–31)*, p. 281].
- [2.](#) *Pravda*, 28 October 1988.
- [3.](#) Group “A” refers to means of production; group “B” to items of personal consumption (*translator*).
- [4.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1989, № 7, p. 58.
- [5.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Predannaia revoliutsiia*, p. 61 [Cf. Leon Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p. 61].
- [6.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 38 [*Ibid.*, p. 36].
- [7.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 3 [Cf. “The Soviet Economy in Danger,” *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1932)*, p. 261].
- [8.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 4 [*Ibid.*, p. 264].
- [9.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 7 [*Ibid.*, p. 272].





Poster by Deni, 1933. (Center): *Pravda*, 10 January 1933, with Stalin's speech, "Results of the First Five-Year Plan," given 7 January 1933.  
 (Bottom): The "Red Front" threatens the reeling capitalist.

# 48. Famine

The famine of 1932–1933, which took particularly horrific forms in Ukraine, Northern Caucasus, Lower Volga and Kazakhstan, and was comparable in its scale to the famine of 1921–1922, differed from the latter in significant ways. First of all, in 1921–1922, the Soviet government widely distributed information about the famine to its own people and to the world at large; it turned to foreign governments and social organizations with requests for aid and gratefully accepted this assistance. Under the auspices of the VTsIK, committees of aid to the starving were created in many provinces; throughout the land, a collection of goods was organized for afflicted regions, and millions of poods of grain were sent to these regions from state reserves. In contrast to this, in 1932–1933, the famine was completely hushed up. Articles in the foreign press about the famine were denied, and offers of aid coming from abroad were refused.

Secondly, the famine of 1932–1933 was artificial. Although wide regions of the land were seized by drought, the harvest of 1932 in the country as a whole was not much lower than the average indicators over many years, and by itself did not threaten mass starvation. The gross harvest of grain in 1932 was 69.9 million tons — almost the same amount as in the preceding year of 1931 (69.5 million tons) and in the following year of 1933 (68.4 million tons). However, grain procurements almost doubled in 1932 in comparison with 1928. This increase in grain procurements was needed in order to feed the population in the cities, which had grown considerably during the years of industrialization. The bureaucracy was handling this task with great difficulty. In the fiscal year of 1931/32, the number of people who received bread through ration cards increased, when compared to the previous year, from 33.2 million to 40.3 million, and the quantity of grain designated for supplying the cities and workers' settlements grew from 7.9 million to 9.3 million tons. As a result, the quotas for bread supplies were reduced in urban areas.

Nevertheless, a significant part of the marketable grain continued to be exported abroad. Whereas in 1928, less than 100 thousand tons of grain were exported from the country (from a gross harvest of grain equal to 73.3 million tons), in 1929 — 1.3 million, in 1930 — 4.8 million, and in 1931 — 5.2 million tons were exported (out of gross harvests in the corresponding years amounting to 71.7, 83.5 and 69.5 million tons). Thus, in 1930 and 1931, the export of grain increased by fifty times in comparison with 1928. Grain export continued in 1932, although on a smaller scale (1.8 million tons), and in 1933 (about 1 million tons).

The Stalinist leadership explained that the export of grain was necessary, because only in that way would it be possible to pay for orders of machinery and equipment. At the beginning of the 1930s, the USSR had become the greatest importer of these commodities in the world: the relative weight of the Soviet Union in their world imports reached 30 percent in 1930, and 50 percent in 1932. As a result, in the course of 1931 alone, the foreign debt of the USSR almost doubled, and exports comprised only 67 percent of the hard currency value of imports.



However, the USSR paid for machines not only with grain. Moreover, grain was not the main export item during the years of the first Five-Year Plan. Even in 1930, when the greatest proceeds were received for exported grain (883 million rubles), the sale of petroleum products and timber yielded 1,430 million rubles; furs and flax brought in almost 500 million. Later, when all the capitalist countries were gripped by economic crisis, prices for grain fell sharply on the world market. Proceeds for grain sold at dumping prices in 1932–1933 reached only 369 million rubles, at a time when petroleum products and timber reached 1,400 million rubles. In 1933, the proceeds from the export of grain constituted only 8 percent of the overall export income. Meanwhile, merely half of the grain sold in 1932–1933 would have sufficed to save all the nation's regions from famine.

The government took not a single step to conserve grain in order to feed starving villages, at the expense of reducing the distillation of vodka. Not a single vodka-producing facility was brought to a halt. Stalin strictly continued to stand by the instruction he had made in a letter to Molotov in September 1930: "In my opinion, we must increase (as much as possible) the production of vodka. We must cast aside false shame and directly, openly, go for the maximum increase in vodka production."<sup>1</sup> The increase of vodka revenue was included in state plans. Thus, in 1933, an additional 500 million rubles was projected from the sale of vodka.

Given all these circumstances, the question arises: why did Stalin become, as Fyodor Raskolnikov wrote, the organizer of famine? We see the answer to this question in the following: Stalin used the poor harvest of 1932 in Ukraine and several other regions for political ends, in order to crush the recent outbursts of peasant resistance to forced collectivization and to the compulsory organization of labor on the collective farms.

Concessions to the peasants in the spring of 1932 not only did not lessen the tension between the peasantry and the state, but in many agricultural regions provoked a reaction that was very similar to what had arisen after the article, "Dizziness from Success." The peasants perceived the reduced procurement plans and permission to sell agricultural produce at bazaars according to free prices as a sign of the regime's weakness. After the Central Committee's decree "On the Compulsory Socialization of Livestock," in many regions people began refusing to hand over livestock to the government. In a letter to Stalin on 20 April 1932, Sholokhov describes the forms of resistance to livestock procurement in the Don area. The writer declared:

"a real war has been going on among the farms — agricultural officials and others who have come for cows have been beaten with whatever is at hand, mostly women and children (teenagers) have done the beating, the collective farmers themselves have rarely gotten involved, but where they have, things have ended in murder."<sup>2</sup>

That the legalization of the unregulated peasant market led to a lowering, not only of the procurement of meat, but also of grain, is shown by the fact that in July 1932, grain procurements reached only 55 percent of the reduced plan, confirmed in spring of the same year. Hopes for eliminating the militarized regime in the countryside affected the behavior of workers, too, who had recently arrived in the cities and construction sites from the villages; many of them began to leave the industrial enterprises and return to the country.

Under these conditions, Stalin declared a new crusade against the peasantry. Draconian measures once again began to be applied during grain procurement, but now they were primarily directed at recently created collective farms that had virtually declared a new “grain strike,” i.e., that were refusing to give their grain to the state at extremely low purchase prices. In regions suffering drought, state bodies demanded that the kolkhozes fulfil the original grain procurement plan, and if they refused, severe repression was implemented: confiscation of grain found in collective-farm barns and at the farmsteads of the collective farmers.

In October 1932, extraordinary commissions of the Central Committee were sent out to fight against “saboteurs.” In the Northern Caucasus, Kaganovich headed such a commission. As Khrushchev recalled, upon returning from this trip, Kaganovich informed the leaders of the Moscow City Committee about its results. “It turns out that he left for Krasnodar because a strike had begun there (or as they said at that time — sabotage). The Kuban Cossacks did not want to farm the land in kolkhozes, and as a result of this trip, whole stanitsy [Cossack villages] were sent to Siberia.”<sup>3</sup> From just three villages, the entire population, comprising 45,000 people, was expelled. Other villages were placed on a “blacklist,” which indicated the complete dismantling of state and cooperative trade there; the cessation of all commodity transport; a complete ban on selling their produce to collective and individual farmers; and a purge of the collective-farm, cooperative, and state apparatuses. The method of “blacklists” invented by Kaganovich began to be used widely in other regions suffering through poor harvests.

As in earlier years, repressive campaigns against the peasantry also delivered blows against the local party members, who were now accused of “leniency toward kulak sabotage.” In the Northern-Caucasus region alone, 26,000 people, or 45 percent of all the rural communists, were expelled from the party. In purges of the rural party organizations, the first to be expelled were chairmen of the kolkhozes and secretaries of the kolkhoz party cells.

In several regions, the measures taken exceeded all previous outrages in the countryside: the deportation of innocent individual farmers and whole collective farms, not only because they did not want to sow grain that was to be taken from them virtually for nothing, but also because their neighbors had acted in a similar way. While addressing the “justice” of such measures, Boris Sheboldaev, the first secretary of the Azov-Black Sea regional committee, declared:

“They could say to us: ‘How is it that previously you sent away the kulaks, but now we are talking about a whole village, where there are collective farms and individual farmers. How can this be?’ Yes, we need to pose the question of the whole village, for, in the present circumstances, the collective farms, and the collective farmers, and indeed the innocent individual farmers are answering for the status of their neighbors.”<sup>4</sup>

Terror was widely directed against the peasantry in Siberia as well. The Old Bolshevik Dorofeyeva recalled that, in 1933, she joined a commission of the prosecutor’s office verifying the correct application of the article in the Criminal Code on sabotage. The commission traveled to Novosibirsk in a lounge-car with carpets, a piano, and separate compartments for each traveler. In Novosibirsk, Eikhe, the secretary of the Siberian Regional Committee, organized luxurious relaxation for the members of the commission at a dacha on the outskirts of the city. The commission discovered



that Eikhe had been signing, with Stalin's permission, long lists of people sentenced to be shot on charges of sabotage. Moreover, the condemned were forbidden to submit appeals. Those being labeled saboteurs, for example, were chairmen of kolkhozes who had not carried out the additional demands issued by the regional committees to hand over grain.<sup>5</sup>

Punitive measures against the peasantry were not exhausted by violent reprisals against "saboteurs." The extreme shortage of produce in the countryside prompted, as one of the correspondents of the Bulletin of the Opposition noted, "special measures of self-preservation through concealing part of the harvest: the collective farmers were stealing grain from themselves. There were many ways of doing this: immature ears of grain are cut off; ears of grain are cut off in haystacks and hayricks; the grain is being poorly threshed, deliberately leaving a significant portion of the wheat with the straw; and finally, the grain that is threshed is being hidden ... To consider these phenomena simply from a criminal point of view is impossible because of their mass character. Indeed, what we are confronting is an economic reaction against excessive and premature collectivizing."<sup>6</sup>

The response to this "economic reaction" was the law adopted in August 1932, "On Defending the Property of State Enterprises, Collective Farms and Cooperatives, and Strengthening Socialized (Socialist) Property." According to this law, written by Stalin himself, the penalty for stealing state, collective-farm and cooperative property was death by shooting, a sentence that could be replaced, given mitigating circumstances, by imprisonment for no less than ten years, along with confiscation of all personal property. Amnesty for cases of this kind was forbidden. Already by the beginning of 1933, around 55,000 people had been convicted according to the "Law of Three Spikelets," as the new Stalinist law was called among the people. Of these, 2,100 were sentenced to death. The sentences were carried out in approximately 1,000 cases.<sup>7</sup> The judges declared that their "hand was not raised" to sentence to death "pilferers," who were more often than not women who had been obtaining food for their starving children.

During the first year that the law was in effect, in Kazakhstan alone, 33,345 people were sentenced according to its statutes, including 7,728 collective farmers and 5,315 individual peasants. Besides punishments for "theft" of collective-farm property, ten-year sentences were handed out, for instance, for using collective-farm horses to travel for personal matters, for inadvertently injuring the eyes of a collective-farm horse, and so forth.<sup>8</sup>

Reflecting the attitude of the Left Opposition to this law, a correspondent of the Bulletin wrote:

"Stealing collective property, even if it is potatoes or grain, carries the death penalty. They have completely forgotten that stealing is a product of circumstances, but not of ill will. Crude reprisals replace education and elimination of root causes. We are moving backwards."<sup>9</sup>

One more measure directed at crushing the peasantry was the creation, at the start of 1933, of political departments at the Machine Tractor Stations — power in the countryside had for all intents and purposes passed to these extraordinary bodies.

All these measures taken together also contributed to the mass famine. Thorough concealment of information about the famine led to a situation in which, in the regions that had not been seized by starvation, the majority of the population, including even major party functionaries, did not know of its actual scale. In his memoirs, Khrushchev wrote that in 1932–1933, he had not conceived how famine could arise in Ukraine, which had always been the most fertile grain producer in the country. Only later did he learn from Mikoyan that, at the time, Demchenko, the secretary of the party provincial committee, had come to Moscow and told of how a train had pulled into Kiev from Poltava filled with human corpses. Characterizing the situation in Ukraine as very severe, Demchenko suggested that “Stalin, no doubt, is unaware of this,” and asked Mikoyan to pass on the relevant facts to Stalin. Commenting on this story, Khrushchev noted:

“Here is another familiar trait of that period, when even such a man as Demchenko, a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CP(b) of Ukraine ... could not make an approach himself (to Stalin — *V. R.*), provide information and express his essential opinion. An abnormal situation had already developed: one man was crushing the collective, and others trembled before him. Demchenko understood all this very well, but he nevertheless decided to tell Mikoyan, knowing that Mikoyan at that time was very close to Stalin.”

Khrushchev acknowledged that, if he had learned at the time about the scale of the famine, then he would have found an explanation for this in the spirit of Stalinist propaganda, by placing blame for the famine on “sabotage” and “kulak tricks.” “Only now is it clear that one could not have explained everything in this way alone: it was also necessary to lead the country sensibly.”<sup>10</sup>

Of course, not all communists at that time adhered, like Khrushchev, to the psychology and conduct of an ostrich. In 1933, Sholokhov, for instance, sent several letters to Stalin in which he related cases of violence against the peasantry, instances of people devouring corpses, and so forth. “These examples can be endlessly multiplied,” wrote Sholokhov. “They are not isolated incidents of excesses, but the ‘method’ established on a regional scale for conducting grain procurement. I learned about these facts either from communists, or from the collective farmers themselves who have experienced all these ‘methods’ personally and afterwards have come to me with requests to ‘write about this in the newspaper.’” Sholokhov asked Stalin to send people to the Veshenskii region who “would truly investigate and uncover not only all those who have been applying despicable ‘methods’ of torture, beatings and other abuses against the collective farmers, but also those who have inspired them to do this.”

Stalin replied to Sholokhov, saying that his letters “expose a weak spot in our party and soviet work, they show that sometimes our workers, in wanting to restrain the enemy, inadvertently beat their friends and even stoop to sadism.” However, after this remark, Stalin claimed that Sholokhov did not see “the other side,” consisting of the fact that “the esteemed grain-growers of your region (and not only your region), have been conducting a ‘slow-down’ (sabotage!) ... In essence they have been waging a ‘silent’ war against Soviet power. A war of attrition by starvation, dear comrade Sholokhov.”<sup>11</sup>

Notions about relations between collective farmers and the state as a “war by starvation” were presented in a speech by Stalin at the joint session of the Politburo and Presidium of the TsIK on 27

November 1932, where he explained that the difficulties in procuring grain were due to “the infiltration of anti-Soviet elements into the collective farms and state farms,” who were deliberately organizing sabotage. Another reason was that many village communists were “excessively idealizing the collective farms.”<sup>12</sup>

Having cited these words by Stalin in a speech at the joint plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission (January 1933), Kaganovich declared that sabotage was being conducted in the villages and that the collective farms were being corrupted from within “first of all, by some of the kulaks who have not been resettled; secondly by well-to-do peasants who are growing into kulaks and who closely associate with them; thirdly, by those who have escaped from exile and are hiding among their relatives, and sometimes among ‘tender-hearted’ party members, who have party cards in their pockets but in fact are traitors to the interests of the toilers. And finally, this is being done by representatives of the bourgeois — White-Guard, Petliurist, Cossack, S.R., and other — intelligentsia ... Kulak influence has seized even individual groups of village communists, including leaders of collective farms and stanitsy.”<sup>13</sup>

These statements, placing blame for “sabotage” on kulaks who had already been virtually liquidated, disguised a new outburst of mass peasant uprisings, which were suppressed through the use of armed forces, including even military aircraft. As the well-informed Alexander Orlov recalled, during these events there were many instances of small army detachments going over to the side of the insurgent peasants. Frinovsky, the deputy chairman of the OGPU who was responsible for the punitive operations, reported at a session of the Politburo that thousands of corpses of Red Army soldiers were floating in the rivers of the Northern Caucasus — so great were the losses of military detachments sent to suppress the uprisings. Tens of thousands of the participants in these uprisings were shot, and hundreds of thousands were sent into exile and to concentration camps.<sup>14</sup>

A particularly intense situation developed in Ukraine, where the anti-collective-farm moods of the peasants were used by nationalists and separatist elements. Even in 1929–1930, peasant uprisings not infrequently occurred under the slogan: “For an Independent Ukraine.”<sup>15</sup> The beginning of the 1930s saw the rise of the underground nationalist organizations “Union for the Liberation of Ukraine” (SVU), “The Ukrainian Nationalist Center” and the “Ukrainian Military Organization,”<sup>16</sup> headed by fervent anti-communists, remnants of the Petliura forces and predecessors of the followers of Bandera. In the struggle against these truly anti-Soviet forces, Stalin fabricated a new amalgam — the imaginary union of these organizations with the communist and non-party intelligentsia who had opposed the “Russification” of Ukrainian culture and were grouped around the old Bolshevik and People’s Commissar of Education of the Ukrainian SSR, Nikolai Skrypnyk.

The drought of 1932 in Ukraine could not have been more timely for Stalin, allowing him to undermine the mass base of the anti-kolkhoz movements, and “overcome by famine” whole regions of the republic. Half of the nation’s deaths from hunger in 1933 fell on Ukraine.

The mass famine in the republic was preceded by several punitive expeditions by Molotov and Kaganovich. Even before the ripening of the harvest of 1932, Stalin sent them to participate in the

Third Conference of the Communist Party of Ukraine, at which the increased plan of grain procurements was passed. However, as a result of the existing insufficient sowing of cereal crops, the low harvest because of drought, and the peasants' unwillingness to give up their grain for virtually nothing, by 25 October this plan was fulfilled by only 39 percent. At the end of October, an extraordinary commission headed by Molotov arrived in Ukraine, and in December, Kaganovich followed. Under their pressure, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the KP(b)U [Ukrainian Communist Party] adopted a whole series of decrees calling for repressive measures against individual farmers, collective farmers, and the leaders of kolkhozes, local party and Soviet bodies. Stanislav Redens, the chairman of the Ukrainian GPU, was ordered to work with Stanislav Kosior, the first secretary of the CC of the Ukrainian Communist Party, in developing a plan of operations for liquidating "the main kulak and Petliura counter-revolutionary nests."<sup>17</sup>

At the beginning of December 1932, Kosior reported to Stalin that in the previous month they had arrested about two thousand chairmen, members of management, accountants and other kolkhoz officials, and had sent to trial 206 group cases of "kulak and anti-Soviet elements."

Under pressure from Kaganovich, the Politburo of the Ukrainian Communist Party adopted a decree ordering kolkhozes that had not fulfilled the plan of grain procurements to surrender all the grain they had, including seed funds.

Attempts by leaders of starving *oblasts* and *raions* to provide grain from state reserves to the kolkhozes was furiously halted by Stalin. One of the few party leaders who survived Stalin's camps, R. Ya. Terekhov, recalled how Stalin maliciously interrupted his request to allocate grain to starving villages in the Kharkov area:

"People have said that you, comrade Terekhov, are a good orator, but it turns out you are a good story-teller. You've concocted such a tale about famine that you thought you would frighten us, but it won't work! Wouldn't it be better if you left your posts as secretary of the Kharkov Oblast Committee and Central Committee of the KP(b)U and joined the Writers' Union? You would write fairy tales and fools would read them."<sup>18</sup>





*First All-Union Congress of Kolkhoznik-Shockworkers, February 1933.*

Stalin not only forbade specially empowered leaders from Moscow and Ukraine to provide aid to the collective farmers, even to supply grain for sowing, but sent out a circular at the end of 1932, in which he called leaders of one of the regions in Ukraine, who had decided to leave the kolkhozes grain for sowing and for emergency stores, “deceivers of the party and swindlers who knowingly conduct kulak policy.” Stalin demanded that such officials “immediately be arrested and awarded for their accomplishments, that is, give each of them from five to ten years in prison.”<sup>19</sup>

Only in February 1933, when famine in Ukraine and Northern Caucasus had assumed a gigantic scale, and the kolkhoz warehouses before the sowing campaign turned out to be empty, was a directive issued by the Central Executive Committee and Council of People’s Commissars, “On Aid in Sowing to Kolkhozes of Ukraine and Northern Caucasus,” according to which these regions were allocated seed loans.



*Voroshilov, Stalin and Ordzhonikidze among delegates to the First All-Union Congress of Kolkhoznik-Shockworkers, February 1933.*

It was only on 15 March 1933 that Kosior dared to report to Stalin that “in total, according to GPU records, 103 *raions* in Ukraine are gripped by famine.” A report by the head of the Kiev *oblast* department of the GPU stated that figures at the disposal of the GPU about victims of famine “have significantly been decreased, insofar as the regional apparatuses of the GPU do not keep track of the number of starving and malnourished, and the true number of those who have died is frequently unknown in the village councils.”<sup>20</sup>

At the very height of the starvation, in February 1933, the first All-Union Congress of Kolkhoznik-Shockworkers was convened, where not a word was said about the famine. Moreover, in a speech at this congress, Stalin declared to the collective farmers that the main difficulties in the kolkhoz movement had already passed, and “those difficulties that stand before you are not even worth seriously talking about. In any case, in comparison with the difficulties which workers endured ten to fifteen years ago, your present difficulties, comrade kolkhozniks, are child’s play.” Later, Stalin claimed that, thanks to the kolkhozes, no less than twenty million peasants had been saved from poverty and ruination, and had been turned “into well-provided for people ... This is the kind of achievement that the world has never known and that not a single state in the world has ever achieved.” Finally, Stalin promised that “we ... in some two to three years will raise all kolkhozniks ... to the level of the well-to-do, to the level of people enjoying an abundance of produce and leading a fully cultured life.”<sup>21</sup>

All these hypocritical words were spoken at a time when hundreds of thousands of starving peasants had fled to the cities in search of at least some kind of sustenance. Their way was obstructed at railway stations by blocking detachments, who did not allow people to pass from regions seized by hunger. Those who nevertheless did manage to make their way to a city, could not obtain bread even there, because it was sold only according to ration cards or at extremely high prices at commercial stores. In Kiev, Kharkov, Tashkent and many other cities, even in Moscow, each morning special teams gathered the corpses of completely emaciated people. At the same time, even for mentioning “famine in the south,” people were arrested for conducting “counter-revolutionary agitation.”

Of course, it was impossible to completely conceal the famine. An action was taken, therefore, aiming to lay blame for the famine on the wrecking activity of officials in the central agricultural commissariats. A report was published in the press about the trial of seventy-five officials of the People’s Commissariat of Agriculture and the People’s Commissariat of State Farms, “coming from bourgeois and land-owning classes,” who were charged with sabotage in agriculture “with the goal of undermining the material position of the peasantry and creating a state of famine in the country.” Thirty-five people were sentenced to be shot, and the remaining to long prison terms.<sup>22</sup>

Only in the spring of 1933 did Stalin decide to halt the terror that had swept across the countryside for the preceding five years or more. On 8 May, all party, soviet, and security organs were sent a secret directive signed by Stalin and Molotov which acknowledged the presence of lawless and tyrannical behavior in the countryside. It directly stated that “mass chaotic arrests” are being made by chairmen and members of kolkhoz administrations, by chairmen of village councils and secretaries of party cells, by *raion* and *krai* officials. “Arrests are being made by everyone who feels like it, and by those, strictly speaking, who have no right to make arrests. It is not surprising that, with such a wild outburst of the practice of arrests, the organs having the right of arrest, including the organs of the OGPU, and especially the police, lose all sense of measure and frequently make arrests without any foundation, acting according to the rule: ‘First arrest, and then figure things out.’” Thus, blame for repressions was once again laid on local officials who “cling to outmoded forms of work,” at a time when now “we have no further need of mass repressions, affecting, as everyone knows, not only the kulaks, but both individual farmers and some of the collective farmers.”

The directive forbade “people not empowered to do this by law” to make arrests, and to detain people before trial for trivial offenses. It ordered that 400,000 people under arrest be freed, or half of the overall contingent of those held at that time in prisons and investigative isolators.


Stating that the Central Committee and Council of People’s Commissars had requests from localities for the immediate resettlement from agricultural areas of approximately another hundred thousand families, the directive demanded “the immediate cessation of any mass peasant resettlements.” In doing so, however, there was the caveat that the resettlements should continue in the future, but “only in individual and private cases, and only with regard to those farms, whose heads are conducting an active struggle against kolkhozes and are organizing the rejection of sowing and



procurements.” On this basis, the resettlement of twelve thousand more farms “was allowed” by instruction, and the corresponding “order” was sent to the republics and regions.<sup>23</sup>

At a time when the official Stalinist propaganda and “friends of the USSR” abroad were labelling all reports of famine as slander, the *Bulletin of the Opposition* reported on new Stalinist crimes and about the shameful attitude of the ruling bureaucracy toward the starving. Already in 1932, a correspondent of the *Bulletin* wrote that “hunger is taking the most acute forms, especially severely in Ukraine: there have been instances of people collapsing on the street from starvation.”<sup>24</sup> Another correspondent recounted that “in the Northern Caucasus and in Ukraine, the grain procurements, as well as agricultural operations are carried out under terrible pressure. Ruthless repressions are sweeping ever broader circles of peasants, including local communists.”<sup>25</sup>

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ЛЕНИНГРАДСКИЙ СОЮЗ ПОТРЕБИТЕЛЬСКИХ ОБЩЕСТВ

**Хлебный абонемент № 39693**

**на 5 пайков на СЕНТЯБРЬ 1933 г.**

Фамилия \_\_\_\_\_

Адрес \_\_\_\_\_

М. П. \_\_\_\_\_

Председатель Правления ЛСПО *Олиш*

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Экз. ЛОСО им. г. Тудора. Зак. № 2041-1933.

Ration card issued for white and rye bread in Leningrad, 1933.

In a letter about his trip to Ukraine, an author of the *Bulletin* described the striking social contrasts that had appeared especially graphically in the period of mass hunger. “In Moscow, i.e., in the most privileged and best supplied city, you won’t see in several months what in several days in the provinces is so staggering. ... On the journey, everywhere there are unending pictures of horrifying poverty. Everything brings to mind the period of the civil war. ... People lie for many days at the train stations; men, women, children, all together, side by side. ... Where are they going? And why? Somewhere they can buy potatoes, or bread; somewhere work can be found; somewhere there are better supplies at the factory. In any case, everything revolves around one’s daily bread. Because of



bread, people subject themselves to the monstrous suffering of these journeys. The ‘leaders’ and bureaucrats contemptuously call them ‘job-hoppers,’ ‘kulaks,’ ‘speculators,’ and sometimes simply peasants, which is supposed to mean that their hunger is not so important, that they are still not real proletarians, but meanwhile, these people must be ... fed. These ‘speculators’ are speculating only in order to receive a piece of bread. These ‘job-hoppers’ are hopping to another factory for the very same piece of bread.”<sup>26</sup>

In a report about a trip to the USSR as part of a May First delegation, a foreign communist described his impressions in the following way: “There were many peasants with bundles (in rags) who had walked or ridden from the village. Many were sitting on the sidewalks, blocking the way with their bundles. They were waiting. But for what? ... When we ask the translator, who are these ragged and exhausted people, he invariably answers: ‘kulaks.’” Later on, the letter’s author describes his conversation with a Soviet communist. “All these people who you see loitering about the streets,” he said, “are peasants who have left the village. It’s not true that they are only kulaks. ... I have seen kolkhozniks who are absolutely famished and in despair, they tell longingly how they once drank milk; I have seen old women and men who were driven from the kolkhozes because they were not able to fulfill the norm. ... They gradually sell everything that they have in order to supply what was demanded (this refers to state deliveries which were given the character of mandatory taxes – *V. R.*), and nothing was enough. And then they go into the city; and here they are, here on the street, not knowing what to do next.” The letter told how the bureaucracy reacted to the famine: “In response to questions about famine, the well-fed bureaucrat shows that he doesn’t want to know that others are famished. ‘As if we have people who are starving! Whoever is starving is a kulak.’”<sup>27</sup>

Calling the mass hunger and other misfortunes befalling the peasantry the immediate results of Stalin’s methods of collectivization, Trotsky wrote:

“The destruction of people — by hunger, cold, epidemics and measures of repression — is unfortunately less accurately tabulated than the slaughter of livestock, but it also numbers in the millions.”<sup>28</sup> The blame for these sacrifices lies not upon collectivization, but upon the blind, reckless, and violent methods by which it was carried through.”<sup>29</sup>

Noting that “never before had the breath of destruction hung so directly over the territory of the October Revolution as in the years of complete collectivization,” Trotsky enumerated the most terrible Stalinist actions and their destructive consequences:

“Discontent, distrust, bitterness, were corroding the country. The disturbance of the monetary system; the mounting up of stable, ‘conventional,’ and free market prices; the transition from a simulacrum of trade between the state and the peasants to a grain, meat and milk levy; the life-and-death struggle with mass plundering of the collective-farm property and mass concealment of these plunderings; the purely military mobilization of the party for the struggle against kulak sabotage after the ‘liquidation’ of the kulaks as a class; together with this: a return to food cards and hunger rations; and finally a restoration of the passport system — all these measures revived throughout the country the atmosphere of the civil war which had seemingly ended so long ago.”<sup>30</sup>

Trotsky repeatedly stressed that the countryside suffered the most severe consequences from Stalin’s adventurist course, which continued for the duration of the entire first Five-Year Plan, and that forced collectivization inflicted enormous damage to the cause of socialism. In addition, he felt

that a no less terrible defeat for the world communist movement had occurred with the seizure of power in Germany by fascism, the path to which had been paved by the sectarian policy of the Stalinized Comintern.

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- [1.](#) *Istoriia SSSR*, 1990, № 4. p. 17.
- [2.](#) *Dokumeny svidetel'stvuiut*, p. 472.
- [3.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1990, № 3, p. 60.
- [4.](#) B. P. Sheboldaev, *Stat'i i rechi. 1931–1933*, Rostov na Donu, 1934, p. 67.
- [5.](#) *Sotsialisticheskaia industriia*, 15 August 1989.
- [6.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1932, № 29–30, p. 15.
- [7.](#) *Istoriia SSSR*, 1990, № 5, p. 26.
- [8.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1989, № 7, pp. 55–56.
- [9.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1933, № 35, p. 26.
- [10.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1990, № 3, pp. 61–62.
- [11.](#) *Pravda*, 10 March 1963.
- [12.](#) *Bol'shevik*, 1933, № 1–2, p. 19.
- [13.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- [14.](#) A. Orlov, “Tainaia istoriia stalinskikh prestuplenii” [The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes], *Ogonėk*, 1989, № 47, p. 18.
- [15.](#) V. Vasiliev, “Krest'ianskie vosstaniia na Ukraine. 1929–1930 gody,” *Svobodnaia mysl'*, 1992, № 9, pp. 74–75.
- [16.](#) A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiia vlasti*, p. 277.
- [17.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1990, № 9, pp. 130–131.
- [18.](#) *Pravda*, 26 May 1964.
- [19.](#) *Pravda*, 16 September 1988.
- [20.](#) *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1990, № 9, p. 131.
- [21.](#) I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 13, pp. 243, 247, 249 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 13, pp. 249, 254, 256].
- [22.](#) *Izvestiia*, 12 March 1933.
- [23.](#) *Istoriia SSSR*, 1990, № 6, pp. 41–42.
- [24.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1932, № 31, p. 23.
- [25.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1933, № 33, p. 26.
- [26.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1933, № 35, p. 26.
- [27.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.
- [28.](#) According to estimates of contemporary Soviet and foreign researchers, the number of victims of the famine in 1932–1933 was three to four million people; besides this, two million people, cattle-breeders in Kazakhstan, migrated beyond the borders of the country (*Istoriia SSSR*, 1990, № 5, p. 27).
- [29.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Predannaia revoliutsiia*, p. 37 [Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 35].
- [30.](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38 [*Ibid.*, pp. 35–36].



Two posters attacking Social-Democrats as “social-fascists.”

“The path of German social-fascism is complete betrayal of the cause of the working class.” [Footprints representing 1914, 1918, 1929, 1930, 1931.]



Third Decisive [year of the FYP], Red Front. [II International in lower left.]

# 49. The Theory of “Social-Fascism” and Hitler’s Coming to Power

From the end of the 1920s, Stalin made an adventurist, ultra-left turn, not only within the Soviet Union, but also in the international Communist movement, which was forced to accept the so-called “theory of the third period.” In accordance with this “theory,” after the October Revolution, following the first period (the revolutionary upsurge of 1918–1923) and the second period (the relative stabilization of capitalism in 1924–1928), a new period had begun that heralded immediate revolutionary struggles to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in capitalist countries.

This theory, which promised a swift and decisive collapse of capitalism, was linked to the promulgation of the thesis that “social-fascism” was the main force inhibiting this collapse, by means of impeding the militant activity of the working class. In October 1928, Stalin accused Communists who challenged the sectarian slogan of “class against class,” or who did not want to emphasize the question of fighting against left Social-Democracy, of striving to “adapt communism to Social-Democratism.”<sup>1</sup>

In a resolution of the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI in July 1929, “social-fascism” was declared to be “a special form of fascism in countries with strong Social-Democratic parties.”<sup>2</sup> As he was editing the plenum’s documents, Stalin inserted the following addition: “The Plenum of the ECCI proposes turning special attention to strengthening the fight against the ‘left’ wing of Social-Democracy, which is inhibiting the process of Social-Democracy’s disintegration, by sowing illusions about the oppositional nature of this wing in the policies of leading Social-Democratic bodies, while in actual fact fully supporting the policy of social-fascism.”<sup>3</sup> Such a directive was wrong by the very fact that no “disintegration” of Social-Democracy had occurred. In 1928, the Communist parties of the capitalist nations had in their ranks 583,000 members (in 1921 — 1,516,000, i.e., almost three times as many), whereas the parties of the Socialist International had 6,637,000 members, 350,000 more than in 1923.

Honest Communists who had observed the real distribution of political forces in the capitalist countries indicated to Stalin the absurdity of equating Social-Democracy with fascism. In June of 1929, Georgy Chicherin, the People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs, sent Stalin a letter in which he called “cries about social-fascism” to be absurd nonsense. He warned that basing policy on such incorrect directives “means leading the Comintern to its destruction.”<sup>4</sup> A year later, Chicherin was dismissed from his post and removed from any political activity.

Instructions to direct the main blow at Social-Democracy, and especially at its left elements, as “masked,” and therefore more dangerous enemies of the working class than its open enemies, the fascists, were confirmed at the Sixteenth Congress of the VKP(b) in 1930, where Molotov declared



the task of “an all-out attack on rising fascism and social-fascism.”<sup>5</sup> A few months earlier, Stalin had written into the draft of the ECCI’s May Day Appeal words to the effect that intervention against the Soviet Union was being prepared not only by the capitalist states, but by “their servants from the camp of the Social- Democrats...”<sup>6</sup>

The Eleventh Plenum of the ECCI in March-April 1931 described the development of Social-Democracy as “an uninterrupted process of the evolution toward fascism”, and called the Social-Democratic Party “an active factor and conductor of the fascization of the capitalist state.”<sup>7</sup> In a draft of theses for a report by Manuilsky at the Eleventh Plenum, Stalin wrote:

“The exposure of Social-Democracy, the exposure of the Second International, freeing the working-class masses from the influence of Social-Democracy, and the isolation and overcoming of Social-Democracy constitute the main task of the Communist parties. Without solving this task, a successful struggle of the proletariat for its emancipation from the chains of capitalism is impossible.”<sup>8</sup>



*Georgy V. Chicherin*  
(1872–1936)

In this way, the documents of the Comintern excluded any possibility of an alliance between Communist and Social-Democratic parties in order to create a united workers’ front against the approach of fascism.

Of course, Communists and Social-Democrats were divided by very profound political differences, expressed most of all in the orientation of the former toward the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist order, and of the latter toward the reformist “improvement” of capitalism. The

Communists, including the Left Opposition, ruthlessly condemned both the betrayals by the leaders of the Second International in 1914, when they supported “their own” bourgeois governments in the First World War, and the bloody suppression in 1918 by the Social-Democratic leaders of the revolutionary activity of the German proletariat; they condemned the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, and the anti-Bolshevik propaganda which the international Social-Democracy had spread from the first days of Soviet power. After the split between the Second and Third Internationals, the Social-Democratic parties remained larger and more influential than the Communist parties in the majority of countries in Western Europe. In several of these countries (for instance, in England and Germany), they became ruling parties in the 1920s, and in that capacity conducted policy that was hostile to the USSR. Finally, the leaders of the right-wing Social-Democrats, along with the Stalinists, impeded attempts to overcome the split in the workers’ movement, each guided by their own political considerations: fears that under conditions of the leftward radicalization of the masses, the Communists — given the establishment of a united workers’ front — would seize the political initiative and increase their influence within the working class.

Under these conditions, Trotsky proved to be the sole figure in the workers' movement who understood that, when confronting the threat that fascism presented to the fate of humanity, its civilization and culture, the differences between Communists and Social-Democrats must occupy second place. Without renouncing his former critical evaluation of social-reformism, he led an irreconcilable battle against the theory of "social-fascism," which was disorienting the Communist parties and isolating them from the Social-Democratic workers. Stressing that fascism was an anti-democratic and obscurantist force, irreconcilably hostile not only to Communists, but also to Social-Democrats, he pointed out that, by equating Social-Democracy with fascism, the leadership of the Comintern was replacing revolutionary policy with demagogic and impotent abuse. "By trying at one blow to solve the problem of controlling the masses, the Sixth Congress has adopted the theory of 'social-fascism,'" he wrote in 1930. "... In those countries where fascism represents a force, i.e., primarily in Italy, then in Austria and Germany, Social-Democracy will not find it hard to show the masses not only the difference, but even the hostility, between itself and fascism."<sup>9</sup> As for resolutions of the Comintern forbidding joint actions of Communists and Social-Democrats, Trotsky wrote:

"How is it possible to reject practical agreements with reformists in instances when they, for instance, are leading strikes? ... It is just as impermissible to block one's way to practical agreements with reformists — not only with the Social-Democratic masses, but in many cases even with its leaders ... in the struggle against fascism."<sup>10</sup>

Trotsky pointed out that, in Germany and Austria, the political crisis was bringing to the fore, not the struggle of Communists against "social-fascism," but the collision between fascism and Social-Democracy. The formula of social-fascism, devoid of any content, did not reveal, but rather concealed, this real conflict and facilitated the victory of fascist forces. In that case, what would occur would be not only the physical extermination of Communists, but the ruthless destruction of all Social-Democratic organizations. Therefore, the drawing together of Communists and Social-Democracy for the struggle against fascism had become the most urgent demand of the time.

"To equate Social-Democracy and fascism at a time when Social-Democratic workers have a mortal hatred of fascism, and their leaders have just as mortal a fear of the same, means to go against real political considerations."<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to directives of the Comintern prohibiting Communists from "using the absolutely real and profound antagonism between national Social-Democracy and national fascism,"<sup>12</sup> Trotsky summoned the European Communist parties, especially the German, to conduct a united front policy, i.e., to offer the Social-Democrats and the trade unions led by them a program of mutual struggle against the onset of fascism. In response to this appeal, the Comintern officials accused Trotsky, and the groups of the Left Opposition in capitalist countries supporting him, of "idealizing" Social-Democracy.

On 27 April 1931, Trotsky sent a letter to the Politburo of the CC VKP(b), in which he pointed to the importance of the revolution unfolding in Spain, called for the unity of revolutionary forces in this country, and warned that otherwise the revolutionary forces would inevitably be defeated. This would "almost automatically lead to the establishment in Spain of *genuine* fascism of the Mussolini style."<sup>13</sup> Stalin sent this letter to members of the Politburo with the accompanying angry note: "I think that

Mister Trotsky, this gang leader and Menshevik charlatan, should be whacked on the head through the ECCI. Let him know his own place.” Members of the Politburo left comments expressing agreement with this proposal. Molotov wrote: “I suggest that we not reply. If Trotsky speaks out in the press, then we should reply in the spirit of comrade Stalin’s proposal.”<sup>14</sup>

There were close ties between the theory of “social-fascism” and the Comintern’s directives to reject the sharp contrast between fascism and both bourgeois democracy and parliamentary forms of political activity. Posing the question in this way ignored the striving of fascism to liquidate all democratic institutions, rights and freedoms won through struggles of the working class over many years in the leading capitalist countries. In criticizing this adventuristic directive, Trotsky wrote that it hindered Communists from winning the majority of the working class to its side. In order to convince the working class and draw its support, it was necessary to preserve “all elements of workers’ democracy in the capitalist state.”<sup>15</sup>

By “elements of workers’ democracy,” Trotsky meant first of all the political organizations and press organs, both Communist and Social-Democratic, against which the fascists had prepared devastating attacks. He stressed that the fascist parties could “carry out their task only by crushing the resistance of the proletariat and eliminating all possible forms of such resistance. This is the historical function of fascism.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore he called upon the German Communists to “come to the defense of those material and spiritual positions which the working class had managed to win for itself in the German state.”<sup>17</sup> To do this, it would be necessary to openly say to the Social-Democratic, Christian and non-party workers:

“The fascists, a small minority, want to overthrow today’s government in order to seize power ... We are ready to defend, alongside you, any workers’ home or any print shop of a workers’ newspaper against attack by the fascists. And we demand from you that you pledge to come to our aid in case of a threat to our organizations. We propose to you a united front of the working class against the fascists. — The more firmly and more insistently we carry out this policy, applying it to all questions, the more difficult it will be for the fascists to catch us unawares.”<sup>18</sup>

From 1930, Trotsky tirelessly showed that the seizure of power by fascism in Germany, which was undergoing an enormous economic and political crisis, was becoming an ever greater danger. While analyzing the results of the Reichstag elections in September 1930, he called upon Communists to avoid having illusions in them over the fact that the Communist party had received 4,600,000 votes, as opposed to 3,300,000 in 1928. He recalled that in 1924, when the wave of revolutionary activity had fallen, the Communist party had received a greater percentage of the workers’ votes than in 1930, when a revolutionary situation had developed in the country. Moreover, “the gains of the Communist party absolutely pale before the leap of fascism from 800,000 votes to 6,400,000.” This leap was evidence that “under the blow of the crisis, the petty bourgeoisie has swung not to the side of proletarian revolution, but to the side of the most extreme imperialist reaction, drawing behind it significant layers of the proletariat.”<sup>19</sup>

Trotsky drew attention to the fact that the Social-Democracy remained a party enjoying the most influence in Germany (in September 1930, more than 8.5 million people voted for it). Fascism was a mortal threat to its existence insofar as it would inevitably destroy the democratic parliamentary

methods by which it conducted its work. Continuation, therefore, of the “wrong policy of the Communist party, finding its highest expression in the absurd theory of social-fascism,”<sup>20</sup> could shortly lead to a fatal result. This policy was enabling the growing distrust of the Communists on the part of millions of Social-Democratic workers and encouraging them to rally around the leaders of Social-Democracy. The policy of the united front with Social-Democracy, and the struggle to defend the democratic conquests of the laboring masses, would not only undermine the positions of fascism, but open enormous possibilities for the Communist Party to solidify its influence among the masses.

“The condition of success, however, is rejection of the theory and practice of ‘social-fascism,’ the harmfulness of which is becoming, under the present conditions, an outright threat.”<sup>21</sup>

Once they had rejected this faulty theory and practice, the Communists would be able to make an agreement with the Social-Democratic organizations. In doing so, the united front of Communists with Social-Democratic and non-party workers against the fascist danger should be built in such a way to conduct defensive tactics. Such tactics were dictated by the fact that, despite the monstrous crisis of the capitalist system, and despite the growth of the Communist forces, the Communist party was still too weak to force a revolutionary outcome. At the same time, the fascists, “thanks to their dizzying success, and thanks to the petty-bourgeois, impatient and undisciplined composition of their party, would be inclined in the next period to go too far in the offensive sphere.” The more that, in the eyes of the workers, the fascists would seem to be the offensive side, while the Communists and their allies would appear to be the defensive side, “the more we will have the chance not only to shatter the offensive of the fascists, but even pass on to a successful offensive ourselves.”<sup>22</sup>

While ignoring all these warnings and prognoses, the leaders of the German Communist Party continued to carry out a sectarian policy, committing ever newer mistakes. In July 1931, the Central Committee of the German Communist Party presented several ultimatums to the Social-Democratic government of Prussia, threatening, in the case of their rejection, to participate in the referendum launched by Hitler’s supporters directed at overthrowing this government. When the Social-Democrats rejected this ultimatum, the Communist Party participated in the referendum under pressure coming from Stalin and Molotov. In evaluating the results of this action, the Political Secretariat of the ECCI wrote on 18 September that, as a result of the intervention of the Communist Party, the referendum had turned into a weapon of struggle “against the democratic illusions of the masses ... against the German Social-Democracy, which was the main social support of the German bourgeoisie in its struggle for a capitalist way out of the crisis.”<sup>23</sup>

In reality, however, the referendum allowed Hitler’s party to sharply increase its influence. In fact, it turned out that the Communists had acted against the Social-Democrats in a bloc with the most reactionary political force. In evaluating this event, Trotsky noted that the Stalinist bureaucracy turned to the leaders of the Social-Democracy with a proposal, under certain conditions, of a united front against fascism. When, however, the Social-Democracy rejected these conditions, the Stalinists “created a united front with the fascists against the Social-Democracy ... Thus these people, without even noticing what they were doing, turned upside down their metaphysics of a united front ‘only



*from below*’ by means of the most absurd and most scandalous attempt at a united front *only from above*, which was both unexpected by the masses and against their will.” This fact served as new confirmation that, “like their teacher Stalin, the Berlin pupils are conducting policy with extinguished lanterns.”<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile the economic and political crisis in Germany continued to grow ever sharper. At the beginning of the 1930s, the country had 1.5 million unemployed, who received purely symbolic aid. The nation was virtually prepared for civil war. The main political forces had their own mass militarized organizations: the Communists had the Red Front, the Social-Democrats their Schutzbund, and the Nazis their detachments of storm troopers.

In these circumstances the German Communist Party continued to be led by the Stalinist formula of needing to wage “mortal combat” against the Social-Democracy. In the fall of 1932, the leaders of the Comintern rejected Georgi Dimitrov’s proposal to appeal to the German workers, regardless of their party affiliation, to jointly create chosen bodies for common combat activities against fascism.

In recalling those times, the famous Soviet journalist Ernst Henry wrote:

“Stalin’s words were just as much a command to the Comintern as his orders to the Red Army or the NKVD. They divided the workers from each other as if they were a barricade. ... Old Social-Democratic workers everywhere were not only insulted to the depths of their souls, they were infuriated. They never forgave the Communists for this. And the Communists, gritting their teeth, carried out the order for ‘mortal combat.’ A command is a command, party discipline is party discipline. Everywhere, as if they had lost their minds, the Social-Democrats and Communists raged against each other before the very eyes of the fascists. I remember this well. I lived during those years in Germany and I will never forget how old comrades clenched their fists as they saw how everything was headed for disaster ... how the theory of social-fascism, month by month, week by week, was paving the way for Hitler. Clenching their fists, ... they went to meet their death which was already waiting for them in the SS torture chambers.”<sup>25</sup>

One might add to this that the Comintern and the Central Committee of the German Communist Party gave the German Communists directives that contradicted each other, and that were extremely inadequate in reflecting the relationship of political forces and the perspectives of further development. At the Eleventh Plenum of the ECCI in March-April 1931, Thälmann declared that fascism had reached its culminating point and from now on it would quickly disintegrate. “We have soberly and firmly established,” he declared,

“that 14 September (of 1930, the day of elections to the Reichstag – *V. R.*) was, in a certain sense, Hitler’s best day, and that what will follow next are not better, but worse days. The assessment which we gave to the development of this party has been confirmed by events.”<sup>26</sup>

When, however, despite this light-minded prognosis, fascism grew within one year into an even more dangerous force, the Comintern and the German Central Committee headed toward the opposite extreme. In speeches and articles of their leaders, the idea was heard more frequently that fascism was growing without restraint and that its victory was inevitable. Therefore, Communists should not “blindly” launch into battle against fascism, but allow it to assume power in order to “compromise” itself. Only then would the hour come for the “offensive” by the Communists.

In response to these ideas, Trotsky wrote:

“Adventurism and light-mindedness, according to the laws of political psychology, have been replaced by prostration and capitulationism. The triumph of the fascists, which was considered inconceivable a year ago, is now considered already guaranteed. ... If this theory were to be established in the German Communist Party, and if it were to determine its political course in the next months, this would signify on the part of the Comintern a betrayal of no less historical proportions than the betrayal of Social-Democracy on 4 August 1914 — but this time with even more horrific consequences.”<sup>27</sup>

On 29 November 1931, the Central Committee of the German Communist Party published an appeal for a “red united front,” of course, only “from below.” This document retained the earlier instructions that, for the victory over fascism, it would be necessary preliminarily to conquer Social-Democracy. “Can we hope that the Communist Party in the next few months will overthrow both Social-Democracy and fascism?” Trotsky wrote in this regard. “Not a single person of sound judgment who is able to read and calculate will risk such an assertion.”<sup>28</sup>

Trotsky believed that one of the main reasons for the mistakes of the German Communist Party was that a regime of unquestioning and unthinking subordination to any directives of its leaders had been implanted in the party. And the leaders of the KPD were in turn fully subordinate to orders from Moscow. “This horrifying ‘monolithic unity’ of today, this fatal unanimity, which every shift of its ill-fated leaders turns into an absolute law for the gigantic party,”<sup>29</sup> he warned, was especially destructive under conditions of the greatest ordeals that threatened to sweep the German CP from the historical arena as a major political force.

The series of elections that took place in 1932 showed that the relationship of political forces in Germany was highly unstable and quickly changing, as always occurs in epochs of turbulent political crises. In the spring of 1932, in the first round of the presidential elections, Hindenburg received 18.6 million votes, Hitler — 11.3 million, Thälmann — about 2.5 million. In the elections to the Reichstag on 31 June, Hitler’s party received 13.7 million votes, the Communist Party — 5.3 million, and the Social Democracy — about 8 million. In the new elections to parliament in November 1932, the Nazis lost 2 million votes, while 6 million voted for the Communists. Together, the Communists and Social-Democrats now had 221 seats in the Reichstag, and the number of Nazi seats shrank from 230 to 196.

In these circumstances, Trotsky showed that a last chance still remained to block Hitler’s path through joint efforts by the parliamentary factions of the workers’ parties. He argued that, under conditions of continued parliamentary democracy, the unceasing growth of fascist influence would be excluded; that in the absence of its terroristic dictatorship, the fascists would inevitably exhaust their social reserves.

“Fascism has included in its ranks such enormous contradictions that the moment is approaching when the influx will cease to impede the outflow. This may happen well before the fascists gather around themselves more than half of the votes. They will not be able to come to a halt, for there will be nothing more for them to expect. They will be forced to launch a coup.”<sup>30</sup>

Trotsky showed that, before such a reactionary overturn were to take place, which would inevitably destroy all other parties, fascism was resting on a relatively limited social base.

“The main army of fascism nevertheless remains the petty bourgeoisie and a new middle layer: the small artisans and shopkeepers of the cities, bureaucrats, white-collar employees, technical personnel, the intelligentsia, and the ruined peasantry.”

Those were the social layers who were casting their votes for the fascists at the elections. And it was from these social layers that the fascists were recruiting their most militant cadres, the combat detachments of the storm troopers. The bulk of the industrial proletariat, however, continued to follow the two workers' parties. And "on the scales of revolutionary struggle, a thousand workers at a major factory represent a force that is a hundred times greater than a thousand bureaucrats, clerks, their wives and mothers-in-law."<sup>31</sup>

A fundamentally different arrangement of social forces would develop after the seizure of power by fascism, which then "would easily find its soldiers." "The capitulationist position of official communism, opening the road to power for fascism, would completely push to the side of fascism both the middle classes, and the still wavering layers of the petty bourgeoisie, and significant layers of the proletariat itself." If the Communist party should turn away from the battle against fascism in alliance with the Social-Democrats, then conditions would arise "ten times more beneficial for fascism than now.

"... Ten proletarian uprisings, ten defeats, one after the other, could not bleed white and weaken the German working class as much as a retreat before fascism would weaken it at the present moment, when the resolution of the problem still remains as to who will be master in the German household."<sup>32</sup>

The economic and political contradictions, which had reached unprecedented acuteness, were seriously coming to a head. The direction of the outcome "would determine for many years to come not only the fate of Germany itself (this in itself would very great), but the fate of Europe, the fate of the entire world."<sup>33</sup> The perspectives of socialist construction in the USSR, and the future of the revolutionary movement in Europe and Asia, directly and immediately depended on the question of who would triumph in the immediate future in Germany.

Trotsky kept warning that

"the coming to power of the 'National-Socialists' would signify, first of all, the extermination of the flower of the German proletariat, the destruction of its organizations, the eradication of its belief in itself and in its future. In accordance with the much greater maturity and acuteness of the social contradictions in Germany, the hellish work of Italian fascism would probably appear to be a pale and almost humane experiment compared to the work of German National-Socialism."<sup>34</sup>

In showing that the leadership of the Comintern, when confronted with the deciding hour of struggle, proved incapable of foreseeing and forestalling its many defeats, Trotsky wrote that it continued to conduct "policies of the ostrich," refusing to take into account the situation that had developed in Germany. Meanwhile,

"one of those key moments in history is approaching, when the Comintern, after a number of major, but nevertheless 'partial' mistakes, which undermined and shattered its forces accumulated in the first five years of its existence, risks committing a fundamental and fatal mistake, which can wipe the Comintern, as a revolutionary factor, from the political map for a whole historical epoch."<sup>35</sup>

The leadership of the Comintern was leading the German working class to capitulation before fascism, which would signify the destruction of the largest Communist party in Europe, a gigantic catastrophe for the entire world Communist movement.

“Of course, at some point triumphant fascism will fall victim to objective contradictions and its own untenability. But immediately, for the foreseeable future, for the next ten to twenty years, the victory of fascism in Germany would signify a break in the development of revolutionary continuity, the collapse of the Comintern, and the triumph of world imperialism in its most repulsive and bloody forms.”<sup>[36](#)</sup>

Trotsky further indicated that a victory of fascism would inevitably lead to war by Germany against the USSR. A Hitler government would be the sole European government capable of waging war against the Soviet Union. In addition, it would act in unison with Romania and other states bordering the Soviet Union, meanwhile having militarist Japan as a potential ally in the Far East. All this would mean for the USSR “a struggle to the death, in the most terrible and dangerous circumstances.”<sup>[37](#)</sup>

In confronting this dangerous prospect, Trotsky never tired of repeating that it was still possible to overcome such an unfavorable development of events. Fascism was a product not only of sharp social crisis, but of the revolutionary weakness of the fragmented German proletariat. This weakness was created primarily by the erroneous policy of the German Communist Party, which, as before, called the Social-Democrats fascists. This knocked the Communists off kilter and prevented them from entering into an alliance with Social-Democratic workers. “The strength of the National-Socialists now lies not so much in their own army, as in the disunity of the army of their mortal enemy.”<sup>[38](#)</sup> At a time when the growing fascist danger should have impelled the workers to close ranks, the leadership of the Comintern continued to dictate to the German Communists the theory of social-fascism, which “became a noose around the neck of the German proletariat. Under the whip of Stalin’s clique, the unfortunate, confused, frightened and harassed Central Committee of the German Communist Party expended all efforts to help ... hand over the German working class to Hitler for crucifixion.”<sup>[39](#)</sup>

Trotsky recalled that already by 1930 the Left Opposition had advanced a practical program of agreements with the Social-Democratic workers. Over the following years, however, almost nothing had been done along these lines.

“How much valuable and unrecoverable time has been lost! Truly little remains. A program of action must be strictly practical, strictly business-like ... without any ulterior motives, so that every average Social-Democratic worker can say to himself: what the Communists propose is absolutely necessary for the fight against fascism.”<sup>[40](#)</sup>

A few months later, as he considered the threat of Hitler’s victory to be imminent, Trotsky despairingly repeated the idea about the time that had been lost for overcoming the split in the German workers’ movement.

“How much time that has been squandered — aimlessly, thoughtlessly and shamefully! How much could have been done, if only over the last two years! After all, it was absolutely clear ahead of time that monopoly capital and its fascist army would use fists and clubs to drive the Social-Democracy onto the road of opposition and self-defense. It was necessary to display this foresight in action before the entire working class, taking onto ourselves the initiative of a united front and not letting this initiative slip out of our hands at every new stage.”<sup>[41](#)</sup>

Under conditions of the sharpening political crisis in Germany, Stalin responded to Trotsky’s criticism of the Comintern’s disastrous line by drawing Communists of all countries into a new and frenzied campaign against “Trotskyism.” As Trotsky emphasized, this campaign was launched



primarily in order to divert the attention of western Communists, at a critical moment for the fate of the world revolutionary movement, away from the ideas and slogans advanced by the Left Opposition regarding events in Germany. If the leaders of the German Communist Party had been free to work out their own political line, then, under the influence of the country's objective circumstances, they would have arrived at a comprehension of these ideas. But they were completely subordinated to Stalin, which is glaringly evident from the character of the new international campaign unfolding, not around the most urgent problems of the German revolution, but around

“the pitiful and deceitful article by Stalin about questions of the history of Bolshevism. It is hard to imagine a greater disproportion between the tasks of an epoch, on the one hand, and the pitiful ideological resources of the official leadership, on the other. Such is the humiliating, unworthy and, at the same time, profoundly tragic situation of the Comintern.”<sup>42</sup>

The problem of the German revolution and the problem of the Stalinist political and ideological regime, extended to all parties in the Comintern, turned out to be bound up into one knot. If historians were being expelled from the party only because they did not glorify “Stalin's deeds in 1917,” Trotsky noted, could the Stalinist regime

“allow the acknowledgment of its own mistakes committed in 1931–1932? Could it renounce the theory of social-fascism? Could it disavow Stalin, who formulated the essence of the German problem in the following way: first let the fascists come to power, and then us?”<sup>43</sup>

The last hope for the Comintern to change its strategy and tactics collapsed after the Twelfth Plenum of the ECCI in August-September 1932. In evaluating the situation in Germany, Thälmann and other speakers at the plenum stubbornly repeated that the Social-Democracy remained the main social base for the German bourgeoisie, which was ever more utilizing the “social-fascist movement as an immediate buttress for a fascist dictatorship.”<sup>44</sup> Sergei Gusev, one of Stalin's emissaries to the Comintern, confirmed that the Communists must direct their main blow, not at fascism, but at Social-Democracy. He defended this point of view on the grounds that fascism was open counter-revolution, calling for intervention against the USSR, whereas “social-fascism” was “camouflaged counter-revolution,” supposedly calling hypocritically for defense of the USSR in a future war, and was therefore more dangerous. Proceeding from the view that Germany was undergoing a period of preparing for socialist revolution, Gusev declared that the main task of the Communists must be “the exposure of Social-Democracy.”<sup>45</sup>

The Plenum's resolutions denied the growth of fascist forces in Germany and once again formally rejected the policy of a united anti-fascist front of the working class. Stressing that this once more revealed the ruthless dictates of Stalin's clique and its disorganization of the German Communists, dooming the latter to inevitable defeat and destruction, Trotsky wrote: “The bureaucracy of the first workers' state — unconsciously, but none the better for it — is doing everything possible to prevent the appearance of a second workers' state in the world.”<sup>46</sup>

# Трагедия немецкого пролетариата

НЕМЕЦКИЕ РАБОЧИЕ ПОДНИМУТСЯ, СТАЛИНИЗМ — НИКОГДА!

Самый мощный в Европе по своей производственной роли, по своему социальному весу, по силе своих организаций пролетариат не оказал никакого сопротивления приходу Гитлера к власти и первому бешеному натиску на рабочие организации. Таков факт, из которого нужно исходить в дальнейших стратегических расчетах.

ни тени ответственности за официальную политику Коминтерна.

С 1923 года, т.-е. начала борьбы против левой оппозиции, сталинское руководство изо всех сил, хоть и с другого конца, помогало социал-демократии, чтоб сбить, запутать и обессилить немецкий пролетариат: оно сдерживало и тормозило рабочих, когда условия диктовали смелое революционное наступление; объявляло

*Trotsky's "Tragedy of the German Proletariat.*

*The German Workers Will Rise, Stalinism — Never!"*

On 30 January 1933, President Hindenburg appointed Hitler Reich Chancellor. After this appointment, events began to develop with stunning rapidity. Hitler immediately dissolved the Reichstag and scheduled new elections for the beginning of March. On 27 February the burning of the Reichstag building took place. On the next day, by extraordinary decree and according to a proposal by the Nazi government, Hindenburg canceled all articles of the Weimar Constitution that guaranteed freedom of the individual, speech, press, assembly and association. Mass arrests of anti-fascists swept across the nation.

Even in a situation of fascist terror, in the elections of 5 March, about five million electors voted for Communists, and more than seven million for Social-Democrats. Another five million votes were cast for the Catholic Party, which was opposed to Hitler. The Nazis garnered seventeen million votes, or 43 percent of the overall number. Immediately after the elections, Hitler's regime annulled the eighty-one mandates of the Communist deputies and thus achieved a desired majority in the Reichstag.

On 14 March, the Communist Party was declared outside the law. On 2 May, the trade unions were shattered, their property was confiscated, and their leaders were thrown into concentration camps. On 22 June, it was the Social-Democratic Party's turn; its activity was also banned. Thus, in the course of one hundred days, democratic rights and freedoms were destroyed that the German working class had won over a span of one hundred years.

In an article on 14 March, "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat," Trotsky stressed that "the most powerful proletariat in Europe, according to its productive role, its social weight, and the strength of its organizations, offered no resistance to Hitler's coming to power and the first rabid assault on workers' organizations." Direct and immediate blame for this lay with the Comintern leadership, which

"isolated the Communists from the mass trade unions; equated Social-Democracy with fascism and rejected a united front with mass workers' organizations in the face of the attacking bands of National-Socialism; sabotaged any initiative for a united defensive front in various localities, and at the same time systematically deceived the workers about the true relationship of forces."<sup>47</sup>

Even after the Nazis had come to power, Stalin continued to orient the German Communists toward the bankrupt formula of “social-fascism.” In the spring of 1933, while editing “What is Happening in Germany,” an article by Fritz Heckert, a member of the Central Committee of the KPD, Stalin added to the author’s words that Social-Democracy had passed over to the side of fascism: “And that’s why, for three years already, Communists have been calling Social-Democrats social-fascists.”<sup>48</sup>

The link between Hitler’s bloodless victory and the policy of the Stalinized Comintern was obvious for all experienced revolutionaries. As the German Communist Erich Wollenberg recalled, Zinoviev told him in 1933: “Apart from the German Social-Democrats, Stalin bears the main responsibility to history for Hitler’s victory.”<sup>49</sup>

In order to distract the Communist Party from such indisputable conclusions, the Thirteenth Plenum of the ECCI, held in November-December 1933, declared the strategy and tactics of the German Communist Party to be correct and prohibited the opening of a discussion of the events in Germany. Counterposing, just as before, the tactics of a united front from below to the tactics of unity from above, the Plenum called upon Communists to fight “against the treacherous leaders of Social-Democracy.”<sup>50</sup>

On 6 February 1933 the leaders of seven socialist parties in Europe had turned to the leadership of the Comintern and the Socialist International with a proposal to convene a conference of the two Internationals to work out a plan of joint actions against fascism. On 19 February, the Bureau of the Second International published an appeal in which it announced an agreement to conduct negotiations with the Comintern and proposed the end of mutual attacks by Communists and Social-Democrats.

The response of the Comintern, published in the form of an appeal to workers of all countries, recommended that the European Communist parties agree to a united front with Social-Democratic parties, but nothing was said about the readiness of the Comintern to negotiate directly with the Second International.

In analyzing the content of this appeal, Trotsky called attention to the fact that in it, “the Stalinists say not a word about ‘social-fascism’ as the main enemy. They no longer recall the great discovery of their leader: ‘Social-Democracy and fascism are not antipodes, but twins.’ They no longer assert that the struggle against fascism requires the *prior* defeat of Social-Democracy. They do not mention the inadmissibility of a united front from above ... Thus the highest lessons of Stalinism during the last four years fly under the table into the waste basket.” However, this did not mean that the Stalinists had decided to radically change their policies in the international workers’ movement. In response to the proposal by the Second International to form an alliance for joint struggle against fascism, “the Stalinist bureaucracy chooses the worst of all paths: it does not refuse the agreement between the two Internationals, but neither does it accept it.”<sup>51</sup>

In the “Declaration of Delegates, Belonging to the International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists), to the Congress of Struggle against Fascism,” written by Trotsky, he speaks of the irreversibility in the next years of the journey upon which Germany had embarked, and about the enormous misfortunes that fascism would bring the German people.

“Fascism brings behind it clouds of starving and voracious locusts who will demand for themselves and obtain a monopoly on appointments and profits. ... The situation in Germany is deeply tragic. The executioner has only begun his work. There will be no end to the victims.”<sup>[52](#)</sup>

Trotsky emphasized that German fascism would inevitably adopt a more sinister and bloody profile than in Italy, insofar as it had seized power under conditions of a severe economic crisis and the impoverishment of the masses that was unprecedented in the country’s history. This poverty increased the lumpenization of broad layers of workers, a process that was beneficial to fascism. Following Germany, the fascist coup immediately began to threaten Austria.

Trotsky’s prognosis regarding Austria as fascism’s next victim came to fruition in February 1934, when the anti-fascist uprising of the Schutzbundists (Austrian Social-Democrats) was crushed in that country. After this defeat, the fascist dictatorship of Dollfuss was established, paving the way for the Anschluss — the forced annexation of Austria by Germany in 1938. A significant number of the Schutzbundists emigrated to the USSR, where they soon shared the fate of the majority of revolutionary emigrants who were subjected to Stalinist repressions.

In the “Declaration” of 1933, Trotsky proposed to discard and condemn the theory of social-fascism and immediately accept the offer by the Second International to negotiate an agreement. “One thing is beyond doubt,” Trotsky wrote at the end of the “Declaration.”

“Very little time now remains for correcting the monstrous errors. If it is wasted, the Communist International will recede into history with a glorious Leninist beginning and an inglorious Stalinist end.”<sup>[53](#)</sup>

Trotsky’s prognosis was tragically and exhaustively borne out.

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<sup>1</sup> I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 11, p. 225 [Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p. 234].

<sup>2</sup> *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional v dokumentakh* [The Communist International in Documents], p. 880.

<sup>3</sup> *Politicheskoe obrazovanie* [Political Education], 1989, № 1, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *XVI s’ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol’shevikov)*, p. 420.

<sup>6</sup> *Voprosy istorii* [Problems of History], 1989, № 9, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional v dokumentakh*, pp. 957, 961.

<sup>8</sup> *Voprosy istorii*, 1989, № 9, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Biulleten’ oppozitsii [Bulletin of the Opposition], 1930, № 10, p. 4 [L. Trotsky, “Open Letter to Members of the VKP(b),” 23 March 1930].

<sup>10</sup> Biulleten’ oppozitsii, 1930, № 8, p. 19 [L. Trotsky, “The ‘Third Period’ of the Comintern’s Blunders,” 8 January 1930].

<sup>11</sup> Biulleten’ oppozitsii, 1930, № 7, p. 26 [L. Trotsky, “The Austrian Crisis and Communism,” 13 November 1929].

<sup>12</sup> Biulleten’ oppozitsii, 1932, № 28, p. 7 [L. Trotsky, “Letter on the Congress Against War,” 13 June 1932].

<sup>13</sup> Biulleten’ oppozitsii, 1931, № 21–22, p. 17 [L. Trotsky, “Letter to the Politburo of the VKP(b),” 24 April 1932].

<sup>14</sup> D. A. Volkogonov, *Trotskii*, vol. 2, p. 297.

<sup>15</sup> Biulleten’ oppozitsii, 1931, № 24, p. 11 [L. Trotsky, “Against National Communism! Lessons of the ‘Red’ Referendum,” 25 August 1931].



- [16.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1932, № 29–30, p. 30 [L. Trotsky, “An Alliance of Social-Democracy with Fascism, or Struggle Between Them?” 9 August 1932].
- [17.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1930, № 17–18, p. 53 [L. Trotsky, “The Turn of the Comintern and the Situation in Germany,” 26 September 1930].
- [18.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1931, № 24, pp. 10–11 [L. Trotsky, “Against National Communism! Lessons of the “Red” Referendum,” 25 August 1931].
- [19.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1930, № 17–18, p. 46 [L. Trotsky, “The Turn of the Comintern and the Situation in Germany,” 26 September 1930].
- [20.](#) Ibid., p. 51.
- [21.](#) Ibid., p. 52.
- [22.](#) Ibid., p. 53.
- [23.](#) *Voprosy istorii*, 1989, № 9, p. 9.
- [24.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1931, № 24, pp. 3, 6 [L. Trotsky, “Against National Communism! Lessons of the “Red” Referendum,” 25 August 1931].
- [25.](#) *Druzhba narodov* [Friendship of Peoples], 1988, № 3, pp. 234–235.
- [26.](#) Cited in: Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1933, № 34, p. 7 [L. Trotsky, “Tragedy of the German Proletariat,” 14 March 1933].
- [27.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1931, № 25–26, pp. 5–6 [L. Trotsky, “Germany, the Key to the International Situation,” 26 November 1931].
- [28.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1932, № 27, p. 18 [L. Trotsky, “Wherein Lies the Error of Today’s Policy of the German Communist Party? Letter to a German Worker-Communist, Member of the KPD,” 18 December 1931].
- [29.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1931, № 24, p. 11 [L. Trotsky, “Against National Communism! Lessons of the ‘Red’ Referendum,” 25 August 1931].
- [30.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1932, № 27, p. 17 [L. Trotsky, “Wherein Lies the Error of Today’s Policy of the German Communist Party? Letter to a German Worker-Communist, Member of the KPD,” 18 December 1931].
- [31.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1931, № 25–26, p. 7 [L. Trotsky, “Germany, the Key to the International Situation,” 26 November 1931].
- [32.](#) Ibid., p. 6.
- [33.](#) Ibid., p. 4.
- [34.](#) Ibid., p. 6.
- [35.](#) Ibid., p. 5.
- [36.](#) Ibid., p. 6.
- [37.](#) Ibid., p. 7.
- [38.](#) Ibid., p. 8.
- [39.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1932, № 27, p. 5 [L. Trotsky, “Open Letter to the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR,” 1 March 1932].
- [40.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1932, № 27, p. 20 [L. Trotsky, “Wherein Lies the Error of Today’s Policy of the German Communist Party? Letter to a German Worker-Communist, Member of the KPD,” 18 December 1931].
- [41.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1932, № 29–30, p. 31 [L. Trotsky, “An Alliance of Social-Democracy with Fascism, or Struggle Between Them?” 9 August 1932].
- [42.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Nemetskaia revoliutsiia i stalinskaia biurokratiia. Zhiznennye voprosy nemetskogo proletariata* [The German Revolution and the Stalinist Bureaucracy. Vital Problems of the German Proletariat], Berlin, 1932, pp. 113–114.
- [43.](#) Ibid., p. 113.
- [44.](#) *XII plenum IKKI. Stenograficheskii otchet* [Twelfth Plenum of the ECCI. Stenographic Record], vol. 1, p. 40.
- [45.](#) Ibid., p. 113.
- [46.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1932, № 31, p. 1 [L. Trotsky, “15 Years!” 13 October 1932].

[47.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1933, № 34, p. 7 [L. Trotsky, "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat," 14 March 1933].

[48.](#) *Politicheskoe obrazovanie* [Political Education], 1989, № 1, p. 83.

[49.](#) I. Doicher, *Trotskii v izgnanii* [Trotsky in Exile], Moscow, 1991, p. 227 [Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast*, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 166].

[50.](#) *XIII plenum IKKI. Stenograficheskii otchet* [Thirteenth Plenum of the ECCI. Stenographic Record], Moscow, 1934, p. 8.

[51.](#) Biulleten' oppozitsii, 1933, № 34, p. 8 [L. Trotsky, "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat," 14 March 1933].

[52.](#) Ibid., pp. 24, 26 [L. Trotsky, "Declaration of Delegates, Belonging to the International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists), to the Congress of Struggle against Fascism"].

[53.](#) Ibid., p. 28.





*Trotsky's German pamphlet, "Der einzige Weg" [The Only Road], 1932, calling for a united front between workers in the SPD and KPD.*



# 50. A Shift in Trotsky's Strategy

On 17 July 1933, after a bloc of radicals and socialists had come to power in France, Trotsky received permission from the French government to live in that country.

In the first years of Trotsky's exile, when the Soviet Union had strained relations with England, the Stalinist press called him "an agent of Chamberlain," but in 1931–1932, when Trotsky advocated the united front policy as the only way to crush fascism, they called him an agent of Social-Democracy. In 1933, the Comintern press began to call him "a despicable agent of the French government" who had come to France in order to help the government prepare an intervention against the USSR. Every day, *L'Humanité* printed threatening articles calling on members of the French Communist Party to demonstrate against Trotsky and commit other provocations that would make it impossible for him to reside in France.

The German fascists were no less furious in their attacks on Trotsky. After Hitler had come to power in Germany, where Trotsky's works enjoyed particularly wide circulation, the Nazis banned and burned them along with all other Marxist literature. The *Bulletin of the Opposition*, which had been printed in Berlin, had to transfer its publication to Paris. Goebbels' newspaper, *Angriff*, called Trotsky "the biggest anti-fascist in the world," "a conspirator and terrorist" who "seeks nothing other than places of disorder from which he could fan the flames in order to carry out Lenin's testament: to subordinate the entire world to Moscow and to Bolshevism." Seeming to echo Stalinist propaganda, which had been trying to achieve Trotsky's maximum isolation, Goebbels' paper offered a practical solution: "send Trotsky to an island just as barren and desolate as Saint Helena (where Napoleon had been exiled – *V. R.*).” On Goebbels' orders, a poster was hung in Berlin with provocative commentary and excerpts from Trotsky's letters that had been discovered during searches of anti-fascists.<sup>1</sup>

Not long before coming to France, Trotsky made one last attempt to appeal to the Soviet leadership's feeling of responsibility. In a secret letter sent to the Politburo, he wrote:

"You can see the situation in the country and the party more closely than I ... The idea of maintaining today's situation through repression alone is absolutely hopeless and fatal ... The nearest and most immediate danger is a lack of trust in the leadership and growing hostility to it. You know this no less than I do. But the inertia of your own policy is pushing you along a downward slope, and meanwhile, at the end of the downward slope lies an abyss."<sup>2</sup>

The goal of Trotsky's letter was to declare the good will of the Left Opposition toward negotiations and collaboration with the leadership of the VKP(b), aimed at "redirecting the party onto the path of normal existence without shocks, or at least with minimal shocks." He emphasized that restoring a regime of trust in the party would be possible only on the condition that there would be a guarantee of "open and honest collaboration of the factions that had historically arisen, with the goal of turning them into party tendencies and later dissolving them within the party."<sup>3</sup>



This letter was evidently prompted by the fact that Trotsky knew about the vacillation and alarm felt by even the highest layers of the bureaucracy, due to the catastrophic situation in the country. He still hoped that forces would be found among them who were capable of placing the interests of the party and country over the interests of preserving their own power.

Instead of a reply to this missive, Trotsky received information about a new series of reprisals by the ruling clique against the old and new oppositions. Only then did he make the decision to sharply change his political strategy. Before the middle of 1933, he had called upon his supporters in the USSR to fight for the cardinal reform of party policy; now he publicly announced the impossibility of a “peaceful,” “statutory” regroupment of party leadership and the removal of Stalin by means of party reform. He wrote in October 1933:

“After the experience of recent years, it would be childish to think that the Stalinist bureaucracy can be removed by a party or Soviet congress. The last congresses have been bureaucratic parades ... There remain no normal, ‘constitutional’ means of removing the ruling clique. The bureaucracy can be compelled only by force to transfer power into the hands of the proletarian vanguard.”<sup>4</sup>

This conclusion was bound up with another, made by Trotsky in 1933, regarding the completion of the Thermidorian degeneration of the Soviet state. He saw the final results of this process in the fact that

“the fundamentally false policy of the uncontrolled bureaucracy has plunged the country into unbearable destitution, set the peasantry against the proletariat, caused discontent in the mass of workers, and bound the party hand and foot.”<sup>5</sup>

Trotsky emphasized that the Bolshevik Party had fully lost the progressive role that it had played after the October Revolution. The uncontrolled power of the bureaucratic apparatus had led to the profound degeneration of both the economy and the political system of Soviet society. In exposing the basic roots of these processes, Trotsky drew a parallel between the fate of money and the state in Soviet society.

“The disproportions in the economy lead the bureaucracy onto the path of growing paper-money inflation. The discontent of the masses over the material consequences of the economic disproportions pushes the bureaucracy onto the path of naked coercion. Economic planning is freed from value control, just as bureaucratic judgment is freed from political control ... One can say that the dictatorship of the proletariat is withering away in the form of bureaucratic inflation, i.e., the extreme swelling of violence, repression and tyranny. The dictatorship of the proletariat is not dissolving in a classless society, but degenerating in the absolute power of the bureaucracy over society.”<sup>6</sup>

The final crushing of all democratic institutions in the party and country had particularly harsh consequences for the fate of the Left Opposition. It was placed in such severe conditions in the USSR, that the possibility of playing a leading role on a world scale was excluded. The revolutionary center of gravity shifted to the West, where the Left Opposition could function legally and attract new supporters to its ranks. Proceeding from this circumstance, Trotsky drew the conclusion that the “grouping of the ‘Left Opposition’ in the USSR could develop into a new party only as a result of the successful formation and growth of a new International.”<sup>7</sup> 1933 marked the beginning of a new stage in the struggle between Stalinism and the Left Opposition.

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- [1.](#) Biulleten' oppositsii, 1936, № 54–55, p. 29 [N. Markin (Lev Sedov), “Trotsky — ‘Ally’ of Hitler”].
- [2.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Dnevnik i pis'ma* [Diaries and Letters], p. 44.
- [3.](#) Ibid., p. 45.
- [4.](#) Biulleten' oppositsii, 1933, № 36–37, p. 9 [L. Trotsky, “Class Nature of the Soviet State”].
- [5.](#) Biulleten' oppositsii, 1933, № 34, p. 27 [L. Trotsky, “Declaration of Delegates, Belonging to the International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists), to the Congress of Struggle against Fascism”].
- [6.](#) Ibid., p. 6 [L. Trotsky, “Problems of the Soviet Regime”].
- [7.](#) Biulleten' oppositsii, 1933, № 36–37, p. 11 [L. Trotsky, “Class Nature of the Soviet State”].

# Conclusion

Toward the end of 1961, when a second wave of criticism was unfolding against Stalinism in the USSR and in foreign communist parties, Palmiro Togliatti stressed:

“I continue to consider the answer to ... the question (about the causes for the rise and consolidation of Stalinism – *V. R.*) to be not fully satisfactory, when everything is reduced to Stalin’s personal negative qualities, which, by the way, were noted and exposed by Lenin in his lifetime. ... We must dig deeper, analyze the objective conditions for the development of Soviet society, but not in order to justify what is being uncovered today, asserting ... that ‘it couldn’t have been otherwise,’ but in order to better understand what happened and draw lessons from it for everyone.”<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, such an analysis was not made in the Soviet Union, where, after the “palace coup” of 1964 that overthrew Khrushchev, official criticism of Stalin came to a complete halt. The turn to an objective study of the contradictory and tragic aspects of the history of Soviet society began only at the end of the 1980s. However, as “perestroika” degenerated in the direction of restoring the capitalist order, an honest scientific analysis was blocked by a new wave of falsifications, no less fantastic and arbitrary than the falsifications of the Stalin school.

It may well be that the historical period examined in our book has been subjected to the most biased assessments. In countless journal articles, Stalin’s “great breakthrough” was declared to be either the natural continuation of the revolutionary strategy of Bolshevism, or interpreted as Stalin’s turn to “Trotskyism,” made suddenly after the “correct” policy he had carried out from 1924 through 1927. In this process, like the official Soviet historiography, journalists from the camp of the so-called “democrats” have practically remained silent, even about a very important issue: forced collectivization was accompanied by a virtual civil war, through which a significant part of the peasantry responded to the despotism and violence that was being created in the countryside. This extremely important page in post-October history did not fit into the framework of either the post-Stalinist thesis about the “monolithic unity” of Soviet society, or of anti-communist conceptions, with their denial of class struggle.

From *a priori* conceptions about the organic continuity between Bolshevism and Stalinism, also came the version of the absolutely arbitrary nature of Stalin’s repressions. This version was shared (although for different reasons in principle) by both Stalinists and anti-communists, who considered that the political regime created by the October Revolution had not undergone degeneration. The adherents of this version did not connect the Stalinist terror with the logic of the inner-party struggle, which compelled Stalin to answer the growing protest within the party against his policies with monstrous counterblows.

In 1928–1933, this process was still far from complete. A fierce political struggle continued within the party that differed substantially, however, in its content and form, from the inner-party struggle of previous periods. The impulse to this struggle was given by the turn made by the Stalin clique to an anti-popular policy that rained heavy blows, not only on the peasantry, but on all

remaining classes and social layers in Soviet society — the proletariat, the non-party intelligentsia, and even a significant segment of the ruling stratum. This turn was possible because, in the struggle against the oppositions in the 1920s, the ruling faction, and Stalin most of all, felt that they could not implement a flexible, farsighted and dynamic policy, and more importantly, that they could not convince the party of its correctness through ideological methods, as had been done under Lenin. Therefore, they established a party and state regime in which political disagreements ceased to be decided by means of a collective, party-wide discussion of controversial problems. The replacement of principled discussions with methods of administrative command and the removal of dissenting voices led to the consolidation of a system of bureaucratic absolutism, capable of maintaining and solidifying itself only through mass political repressions. This radical change of the political system, and the politics of economic adventurism caused by it, provoked in turn a new outburst of oppositional moods within the party.

Several questions will certainly arise before thoughtful readers of this book: Do not its pages present *the very same image* of the past which is cultivated in innumerable writings of today's "democrats"? How does criticism of Stalinism from the left differ from its criticism from the right? What is the main difference between a Marxist assessment of the historical reality of the 1920s and 1930s, and the assessment made by renegades from communism like Aleksandr Yakovlev or Dmitry Volkogonov?

The philosophical and sociological aspect of these complex problems was disclosed in the 1970s by the outstanding Soviet philosopher Mikhail A. Lifshits, in a polemic with the ideological predecessors of the unrelenting anti-communist campaign that is now sweeping across all the republics of the dismembered Soviet Union. Noting the inevitable coincidences between the "cartoonish, superficial, satirical and its ... real model, seemingly justifying reactionary criticism..." the philosopher explained the presence of such coincidences as a manifestation of the enemy's "class truth," i.e., as a real content revealing itself "in the most malevolent attacks against socialism."<sup>2</sup>

"No matter how much points of view may oppose each other," wrote Lifshits, "there is an objective content in human thought. Therefore, coincidences are possible. But when two people say one and the same thing, they are not saying one and the same thing, but something quite different."<sup>3</sup> Denying the possibility that Marxist historical statements could coincide with the "class truth" expressed by opponents of communism, leads to a slide into positions of vulgar sociology, which views human thought not as a reflection of reality, but as a purely subjective expression of a certain social position. In the "combination of the true and the false," which is present in all reactionary ideological constructions, Marxist sociology separates the objective content of the phenomena of social life and social psychology from their distorted interpretation that serves retrograde political aims.

Lifshits emphasized that the enemy's "class truth" includes two mutually complementary elements: (1) "It's true, but disgusting!" (reactionary sociological and political conclusions are drawn on the basis of an analysis of real historical facts and tendencies, containing elements of objective



truth); (2) “It’s disgusting, but true!” (false interpretations of history and sociological generalizations feed on the mistakes and crimes which did occur in real historical practice).

For revealing the differences between the “superficial, satirical caricature” and a truthful historical portrayal, it is futile to construct “abstract lines of demarcation,” or to ignore the “dialectical convergences and divergences of ideas, right up to contact with the opposite.”<sup>4</sup> Official Soviet historiography and sociology during Stalinism and the “time of stagnation” abounded with such “abstract lines of demarcation,” indiscriminately dismissing all statements and conclusions of their opponents as an expression of “hostile slander.”

However, the rejection of “abstract lines of demarcation” does not relieve one of the need to discover *concrete* dividing lines between historical evaluations made by adherents of irreconcilable ideological positions. The *first* such dividing line is the attitude toward the inner-party oppositions, whose numbers and influence today’s anti-communists strive to minimize in every way (Dmitry Volkogonov, for instance, goes so far as to argue that in the 1930s, “real Trotskyists in the nation numbered ... three to four hundred at the most”<sup>5</sup>). In actual fact, many thousands of Bolsheviks passed through the left and other anti-Stalinist oppositions, including almost all the most prominent figures of the heroic period of the Russian revolution. Of course, many of them were “broken” before they fell into the millstones of Stalin’s prisons and concentration camps. However even the facts provided in this book (and many episodes of oppositional struggles continue to remain hidden away in Russian archives) yield a picture of the wide dissemination of oppositional, anti-Stalinist moods in the party. And the fact that the activity of the oppositions from 1928 to 1933 developed under the monstrous conditions of totalitarianism, and was accompanied for their participants with the most terrible sacrifices and danger, undercuts the argument that the oppositionists in those years were “naïve dreamers” or people who simply “yearned for power.”

The portrayal of the crimes of the Stalinist clique depicted in opposition documents, made freshly in the wake of the historical events described, looks no less tragic than the “hindsight exposés” now coming from the camp of the political hypocrites who were yesterday’s defenders of Stalinist historical versions. But this similarity in historical accounts only more clearly reveals the *second* dividing line, connected with an interpretation of the relationship between Bolshevism and Stalinism. In the eyes of anti-communists, the crimes of Stalinism are viewed as manifestations of the “Satanism” of the Bolsheviks, of their primordial and irrational passion for violence against defenseless people; the communist oppositions sharply separated the struggle against true class enemies from the struggle against their own people, and for this reason viewed Stalin’s crimes as the most brutal violation of Bolshevik principles and traditions.

Even under conditions of civil war, when White-Guard armies and conspirators acted in a direct alliance with the intervention of fourteen capitalist powers, the Bolsheviks went no further than the expropriation of major means of production and the partial expropriation of personal property (for instance, crowding more people into living quarters) of the landlords, capitalists and other proprietors in Tsarist Russia. By itself, belonging to the class of major property owners did not result

in deportation or other political repressions. In contrast to this, dekulakization, deliberately directed by its organizers against small proprietors (and in fact, against a significant portion of the middle layers of the countryside), led to the total expropriation of their entire means as producers and consumers, and to their deportation.

The *third* dividing line arises in discussing the issue of alternatives in the development of Soviet society. The works of today's "democrats" stubbornly present the idea in many variations that only "socialism" of that kind (whether it is called Stalinist, bloody, barracks-room or totalitarian) could be built as a result of putting into practice the "doctrinal premises" of Marxism and the political strategy of Bolshevism. The most convincing refutation of this myth is both the critical, and positive, constructive side of the platforms of all the anti-Stalinist oppositions, composed of the most politically mature and theoretically prepared Bolsheviks. Their criticism of Stalinism was developed from the positions of Marxist views of socialism and the means of its construction.

Familiarity with the "agrarian" sections of these programs clearly convinces one that the Bolshevik, socialist alternative to the historically occurring stream of events (an alternative defended in the period examined by both "leftists" and "rightists") consisted in the gradual and voluntary development of the cooperative movement in the village from lower to higher forms, while limiting the private capitalist elements through tax policy and other, primarily economic, measures. It must also be noted that if the policy of the ruling faction, beginning in 1923, had not undergone such sharp shifts — from concessions to private accumulation in kulak households, to senseless violence toward those who had not long before been called upon to "enrich themselves" — then collectivization might have been accomplished without a frontal assault on the broadest masses of the peasantry, causing countless human and material losses.

An analysis of the historical experience and documents of the oppositions also refutes the pro-Stalinist argument, according to which the ruthless pillaging of the countryside, even if one admits its inhumane character, was the necessary price to be paid for carrying out industrialization and guaranteeing that the nation could defend itself. In fact, economically effective ways of mobilizing the resources of the countryside for the needs of accelerated reconstruction (modernization) of the nation's economy did not, and could not, take the form of either dekulakization and "self-dekulakization" of the most productive part of the farming population, or involuntary, and, consequently, unproductive labor in the collective farms, or the virtual civil war which raged throughout the country for five years.

The *fourth* dividing line between Marxist and anti-communist positions is bound up with the attitude toward the socialist foundations of Soviet society — the nationalization of the means of production and the planned economy. Critics of "communism" from the liberal camp see in these foundations a denial of the economic freedom of producers and consumers, naturally necessitating the suppression of political freedom and democracy. Marxists see in the planned economy and nationalized property the highest achievement of social progress. The correctness of this position is shown, first of all, by the fact that even the partial introduction of these elements in leading capitalist

countries has shielded them for several decades from destructive economic crises like the “Great Depression” of the 1930s and have been the most important factor in the survival and stabilization of capitalism in the twentieth century.

Secondly, despite all his unlimited power, Stalin was not all-powerful in doing violence to historical laws. While having granted a privileged caste enormous advantages in the sphere of personal consumption and accumulation, he preserved, although in bureaucratically distorted form, the most important social and economic conquests of the October Revolution. Thanks to these conquests and despite the totalitarian political regime, incompetent management, arbitrariness and whimsicality of the bureaucracy and its “leaders,” the Soviet state achieved unquestionable economic successes. Liquidation of the most monstrous manifestations of totalitarianism (state terror and the militarization of labor) after Stalin’s death allowed a significant rise of the nation’s well-being and culture on the basis of the socialist achievements of the Soviet people; it allowed the development of a system of social guarantees that in many parameters exceeded the social accomplishments of the most advanced capitalist countries. The Soviet people defended these socialist conquests in World War II and they painfully sense their loss in the present period of retreat to a colonial form of capitalist enslavement; they are fighting for their restoration and will fight against the forces of capitalist restoration. As for bureaucratic absolutism, the main brake on the progressive development of our nation for six decades, this child of Thermidor, as historical experience shows, is maintained in a state of inviolability by today’s temporary figures, whose coming to power has given the people neither real political freedom nor genuine democracy.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Trotsky repeatedly stressed that the Soviet bureaucracy was not a possessing class in the scientific sense of the word, since it did not have the property rights regarding the means of production. Therefore it was compelled to support the social foundations laid down by the October Revolution, the loss of which would throw the USSR back by many decades. However, it was performing this function with the type of costs that sooner or later would lead to the explosion of the entire social system. Such an explosion could end either with the overthrow of the bureaucracy, the creation of a revitalized Marxist party and the restoration of democracy in the Soviets and trade unions; or with the restoration of the capitalist order, which “would create a chemically pure culture of Russian compradorism, with ‘the political and legal’ underpinnings of a Denikin or Chiang-Kai-shek type. All of this would be accompanied, of course, with god and Slavic ornamental calligraphy, that is, with everything that these killers need for their ‘soul’s content.’” In addition, the comprador bourgeoisie “could achieve this goal (if it could achieve this goal) in no other way than by means of a civil war lasting many years and devastating the country once again ...”<sup>6</sup>

Clear recognition of this perspective determined the unacceptability, for the communist oppositions of the 1930s, of any kind of collaboration with anti-Soviet forces both within the country and abroad. One of Stalin’s “advantages” over his opponents was bound up with this circumstance. In order to maintain his own power, Stalin did not shun the most unprincipled, purely imperialistic deals

on the international arena, sacrificing the interests of the communist movement in other countries to such deals (right up to the pact with Hitler).

Stalin's other advantage in the struggle against his opponents was that he, like all other rulers of a Bonapartist type, conducted this struggle with base methods. Free of any moral prohibitions or braking mechanisms, he combined mass deception, foul provocations, judicial frame-ups and ruthless terror in his political methodology.

The unprincipled consolidation of the Stalin clique stood in contrast to the political disunity of its opponents, a significant number of whom for an extended time could not free themselves from the bogeymen of "factionalism" and "Trotskyism" that had been created in the 1920s. This fatal mistake of many leaders of the opposition groupings allowed Stalin to deal with them one by one, having turned them into "waste steam," pliable material for repentance, and then for "confessions" at falsified trials. Being placed before a cruel dilemma: either being completely driven from the political arena, or preserving their place in the ruling circle, albeit in a secondary role, they proceeded to meet their inevitable destruction through a long sequence of humiliating public capitulations. Constructing a chain of "rationalization" (i.e., unconsciously justifying their shameful conduct by "lofty" motives), they accepted the logic foisted on them by Stalin of retreating from their convictions: the Soviet Union is surrounded by hostile capitalism; inside the country there is a permanent class struggle; therefore it is necessary to preserve "party unity" at all costs, up to confessing the need for a "warlike order" and hypocritical glorification of the "leader's" unfailing "far-sightedness."

One more reason for securing Stalin's victory in the inner-party struggle was the regime he established of an information blockade in the country. Under conditions of the technological underdevelopment of the means of mass information at that time, this barrier did not allow the ideas of Trotsky and the international Left Opposition as a whole to break through the borders of the USSR to any great extent. The information blockade thus doomed the overwhelming majority of the Soviet people to one-sided and falsified information about the situation in the country, about the regime and its opponents.

The main reason for the victory of the Stalin clique over its communist opponents bore a social and class character. Having alienated the masses from power and from politics, Stalin conducted a policy, characteristic of any Bonapartist regime, of maneuvering between classes and social groups, depending on "a new ruling stratum which strives to secure its privileged position and is apt to see itself, not as the temporary historical weapon of the revolution, but as its completion and crowning achievement."<sup>7</sup> As a result of the victimization of oppositions and dissenters in general, who freed up places in various cells of the social and political structure, he continually refreshed this layer, creating conditions for the vertical mobility of unprincipled and submissive people who yearned for power and privileges.

Nevertheless, even at the end of the period examined in this book, Stalin's victory was not absolute, and the possibility of a genuinely socialist revival of the USSR remained. In the



consciousness of the majority of Soviet people, certainty and faith in the triumph of communist ideas continued to live; they maintained a belief in social equality and justice, collectivism, proletarian internationalism and true popular rule. The old Bolshevik guard had still not been killed off. A significant contingent of opposition elements capable of fighting against Stalinism remained at liberty and enjoyed high authority in the party and among the population. In the event of the first serious social shock, the doors of prisons and camps could open before the other oppositionists.

Bolshevism was not only a Russian, but a powerful international political movement. Of course, it proved to be greatly weakened by the mistakes of the Stalinized Comintern. The crimes of Stalinism in the USSR weakened the attractive force of revolutionary, communist ideas, right at the time when favorable conditions arose for their support by workers of the entire world, as a result of the economic crisis, unprecedented in history, which had shaken the very foundations of the capitalist structure. Although this crisis did not end with the overthrow of bourgeois regimes in a single country, the continuing tension of the contradictions of imperialism opened up the possibility of a new revolutionary upsurge in the West. As the threat of fascist expansion and a new world war became ever more real, new supporters were drawn into the ranks of not only official communism, but also the international Left Opposition. The historical possibility arose that political initiative could be seized by the Fourth International which was taking shape. All this opened up a new stage in the struggle for a genuinely socialist alternative in the development of the USSR and the international workers' movement, a new stage in the combat between Stalinism and "Trotskyism."<sup>8</sup>

Today, the situation throughout the world differs fundamentally from what it was in the 1930s. The majority of countries with nationalized property and a planned economy have turned to the restoration of capitalism and are experiencing a severe economic and political crisis. This does not mean, however, that future decades will pass under the sign of the triumphant march of capitalism, while completely undermining the attractiveness of communist ideas in the eyes of workers internationally. The ecological crisis; multiplying local political crises and wars in various regions of the world; the growing chasm between well-being in the North and South; not only the relative, but also the absolute, impoverishment of the broadest masses of the population in dozens of countries in the "third world" and in former socialist countries; the steady growth of criminality in practically all states of the globe — all this indicates that capitalism, despite the enormous productive forces that have ripened in its depths, is incapable of advancing the world's economy and culture. Sooner or later, a new socialist wave is inevitable, a new upsurge of left forces. One of the main tasks that will stand before them is to not allow a repetition of the tragic mistakes allowed by communists in previous decades. Therefore, a profound understanding of the historical lessons of the past, a study of the political and ideological heritage of Marxists of the 1930s, who developed communist ideas in an irreconcilable struggle against Stalinism, assumes ever more urgent significance.

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1. P. Tol'iatti, *Izbrannye stat'i i rechi* [Selected Articles and Speeches], M., 1965, vol. 2, pp. 643–644.

- [2.](#) *Svobodnaia mysl'* [Free Thought], 1992, № 6, pp. 106–107.
- [3.](#) Ibid.
- [4.](#) Ibid.
- [5.](#) D. A. Volkogonov, *Trotskii*, vol. 2, p. 359.
- [6.](#) *Biulleten' oppozitsii*, 1930, № 11, p. 4.
- [7.](#) L. D. Trotskii, *Stalinskaia shkola fal'sifikatsii*, M.: Nauka, 1990, pp. 6–7 [Cf.: Leon Trotsky, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, London: New Park Publications, 1974, p. xvi].
- [8.](#) I intend to illustrate this stage in my next work, *The Stalinist Neo-NEP. 1934–1936*.

# Glossary of Abbreviations and Terms

**Artiel** : a law against speculation passed by the Central Executive Committee in 1926.

**БАМ [Байкало-Амурская магистраль (БАМ)]**: the Baikal-Amur Mainline, a railway crossing Eastern Siberia and the Russian Far East.

**CC**: Central Committee (of the Communist Party).

**CCC**: Central Control Commission. Highest disciplinary body within the Central Committee.

**CPSU**: Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

**Cheka [(ЧК)Чрезвычайная комиссия по борьбе с контрреволюцией, спекуляцией и саботажем]**: The Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation and Sabotage; the Soviet secret police from 1917–1922. Replaced by the GPU.

**concessions**: enterprises (commercial, industrial, mining) that were fully or partially owned by foreign capitalists. They began in the 1920s and were ended in 1930. See below: Glavkontsesskom.

**“Declaration of 83”**: document submitted to the Politburo, actually by 84 members of the Opposition, on 25 May 1927. It addressed: 1) the catastrophe in China where Chiang Kai-shek had slaughtered thousands of workers and Chinese Communist Party members in Shanghai in April 1927; 2) the betrayal of the British General Strike in 1926 by the General Council and the Anglo-Russian Committee; 3) the economic situation in the Soviet Union; 4) the threat of war; and 5) the political crisis within the party. From May 1927 until the Fifteenth Party Congress in December, the document was signed by more than 3,000 party members, most of whom were later expelled, exiled or otherwise victimized.

**economic year [хозяйственный год]**: in the 1920s, through 1930, the economic year in the Soviet Union went from 1 October through 30 September. To distinguish it from the calendar year, the economic year was designated in the following way: 1928/1929. In 1931, the economic year was changed to 1 January through 31 December.

**ECCI [ИККИ]**: Executive Committee of the Communist International.

**Five-Year Plan [FYP]**: a central economic plan, developed by Gosplan, covering nearly all aspects of the Soviet economy. The dates of the first Five-Year Plan were 1 October 1928 to 31 December 1932, i.e., a period of four years and three months. “Five in Four” became a major political slogan as Stalin urged accelerated tempos of industrialization.

**Glavkontsesskom [Главконцесском]**: The Main Concession Committee, 1923–1937, government body charged with developing economic ties with Western countries. Pyatakov became first chairman

on 8 March 1923. Trotsky became chairman on 26 May 1925. Other members included Ioffe, Krasin, Preobrazhensky, Mdivani, Litvinov and Stetsky.

**Gosplan [Госплан]:** The State Planning Committee, responsible for economic planning in the USSR.

**GPU [Главное политическое управление]:** Main Political Directorate (1922–1923); main body of state security; the secret police. Successor to the VChK.

**Gulag [Главное управление лагерей]:** Main [Prison-] Camp Administration.

**ИКР [ИКП]:** Institute of Red Professors, founded in 1921 and headed by M. N. Pokrovsky from 1921–1931. Provided graduate-level education in Marxist philosophy, history, economics, and natural science.

**ispolkom [исполком]:** executive committee.

**ITL [(ИТЛ) исправительно-трудовой лагерь]:** from 1929, corrective-labor camp; previously called concentration camp. Prisoners participated in construction of roads, railways, canals, factories, and other works, especially in the North and Far East.

**krai [край]:** an administrative unit, or territory, containing within it both oblasts and okrugs.

**kolkhoz [(колхоз) коллективное хозяйство]:** collective farm. Cooperatives formed by peasants who combined land, implements and livestock.

**Komsomol:** the Communist Youth League.

**kulak:** more prosperous peasant, often employing hired agricultural labor and possessing better machinery, mills, storage facilities, larger livestock herds, etc.

**MTS:** machine-tractor station.

**Narkomtiazhprom [Наркомтяжпром (Наркомат тяжёлой промышленности)]:** People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry.

**NEP [(НЭП) Новая экономическая политика]:** The New Economic Policy, introduced in 1921, allowing reintroduction of private trade and small businesses, while preserving nationalized property in the “commanding heights” of the economy.

**Narkomzem [(Наркомзем) Народный комиссариат земледелия]:** People's Commissariat of Agriculture.

**NKVD [(НКВД) Народный комиссариат внутренних дел]:** People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (1934–1941). Main body of state security, secret police, counter-intelligence. Successor to OGPU.



**oblast [область]:** a relatively large administrative unit, nearing the size of a province.

**okrug [округ]:** a large administrative unit, smaller than an oblast.

**OGIZ [(ОГИЗ) Объединение государственных книжно-журнальных издательств]:** the main Soviet publishing house from 1930 to 1949; successor to Gosizdat [the State Publishing House].

**OGPU [(ОГПУ) Объединённое государственное политическое управление]:** The United State Political Directorate (1923–1934); main secret police and counter-intelligence body of the Soviet regime; successor to the GPU.

**Politburo:** the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The small but powerful party committee making major policy decisions between Party Congresses.

**pood [пуд]:** a measure of weight, approximately thirty-six pounds.

**RAPP [Российская ассоциация пролетарских писателей]:** Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, founded in 1925 and dissolved in 1932.

**Revvoensovet (RVS) [(PBC) Революционный Военный Совет]:** Revolutionary Military Council. Highest body in the military, directing the political leadership of the armed forces. Headed by Trotsky, 6 September 1918–26 January 1925.

**RKI [Рабоче-крестьянская инспекция]; Rabkrin [Рабкрин]:** Worker-Peasant Inspection. Body formed in 1920 to monitor and control bureaucracy. Headed by Stalin, 1920–1922; Kuibyshev, 1923–1926; Ordzhonikidze, 1926–1930; Andreev, 1930–1931; and Rudzutak, 1931–1934. Sharply criticized by Lenin on 23 January 1923 for ineffectiveness during the time Stalin headed Rabkrin.

**RSDRP [Российская социал-демократическая рабочая партия (РСДРП)]:** The Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party, founded in 1898. Both the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks emerged from the party in 1903.

**RSFSR:** Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the largest of the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union.

**RVS:** *see* revvoensovet.

**samizdat:** “self-publishing,” i.e., works that were circulated unofficially in the Soviet Union, often in typewritten copies passed hand to hand.

**SNK [CHK]:** *See:* Sovnarkom.

**sovkhoz [совхоз]:** a Soviet, or state, farm. Large farms formed by the state, employing hired labor paid at fixed wage-rates.

**Sovnarkom [Совнарком; Совет Народных Комиссаров]:** The Council of People's Commissars, major body of the Soviet government from 1917–1946. Subordinate to the Central Executive Committee.

**speculation:** the purchase of items with the intention of making a profit by selling them at a higher price. In the Soviet Union, speculation was considered a crime; punishment varied according to the scale of the amounts involved.

**SRs:** members of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

**stagnation, time of [время застоя]:** the twenty or so years from Brezhnev's coming to power in 1964 to the beginning of "perestroika" (in 1986–87).

**STO [(СТО) Совет труда и обороны]:** Council of Labor and Defense.

**tamizdat:** works published abroad that usually had not been approved by Soviet censorship.

**Torgsin [(Торгсин) Всесоюзное объединение по торговле с иностранцами]:** the organization set up for trade with foreigners, or with Soviet citizens who had precious metals or hard currency that could be exchanged for food.

**troika:** a group of three.

**TsIK [(ЦИК) Центральный исполнительный комитет]:** The Central Executive Committee (highest body of the Soviet government from 1922–1938).

**VKP(b) [ВКП(б). Всесоюзная коммунистическая партия (большевиков)]:** The All-Union Communist Party (bolshevik); renamed the KPSS (Communist Party of the Soviet Union ) in 1952.

**volost [волость]:** a small rural district in old Russia.

**VSNTKh [(ВСНХ) Высший совет народного хозяйства]:** Supreme Council of the National Economy. Central state body directing the economy.

**VTsSPS [(ВЦСПС) Всесоюзный центральный совет профессиональных союзов]:** The All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. Headed by Mikhail Tomsky for most of 1918–1930.

# Dates of Party Congresses, Conferences, and Comintern Congresses

## Party Congresses

Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) [RKP(b)]: 8–16 March 1921

Eleventh Congress of the RKP(b): 27 March–2 April 1922

Twelfth Congress of the RKP(b): 17–25 April 1923

Thirteenth Congress of the RKP(b): 23–31 May 1924

Fourteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) [VKP(b)]: 18–31 December 1925

Fifteenth Congress of the VKP(b): 2–19 December 1927

Sixteenth Congress of the VKP(b): 26 June–13 July 1930

Seventeenth Congress of the VKP(b) [“Congress of Victors”]: 26 January–10 February 1934

Eighteenth Congress of the VKP(b): 10–21 March 1939

Nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [KPSS/CPSU]: 5–14 October 1952

Twentieth Congress of the CPSU: 14–25 February 1956

Twenty-First Congress of the CPSU: 27 January–5 February 1959

Twenty-Second Congress of the CPSU: 17–31 October 1961

## Party Conferences

Fourteenth Conference of the RKP(b): 27–29 April 1925

Fifteenth Conference of the VKP(b): 26 October–3 November 1926

Sixteenth Conference of the VKP(b): 23–29 April 1929

Seventeenth Conference of the VKP(b): 30 January–4 February 1932

## Congresses of the Third International (Comintern)

First Congress: 2–7 March 1919

Second Congress: 21 July–6 August 1920

Third Congress: 22 June–12 July 1921

Fourth Congress: 4 November–5 December 1922

Fifth Congress: 17 June–8 July 1924

Sixth Congress: 17 July–1 September 1928

Seventh Congress: 25 July–20 August 1935





# Selected Biographical Notes<sup>1</sup>

AFINOGENOV, Aleksandr Nikolaevich (22 March [4 April] 1904: 29 October 1941). Soviet playwright. Son of railway worker and schoolteacher. In 1918, elected secretary of the Riazan Union of Communist Students. Joins Komsomol and publishes first poems in 1919. In 1921 moves to Moscow, enters Journalism Institute, joins RAPP. Member of RKP(b) from 1922. Begins writing plays for Proletcult. Edits “Northern Worker” newspaper in Yaroslavl. Moves to Moscow in 1927; works in the Proletcult’s First Workers Theater. His play, “Chudak” [The Eccentric] is a success in 1929. “Strakh” [Fear] appears in 1931. Travels abroad in 1932. In October, meets Stalin at Gorky’s apartment. Works on play “Lozh” [The Lie] in 1933, which is blocked by Stalin. In 1937, expelled from party, but reinstated in 1938. In October 1941, killed in a bombing raid in Moscow.

ANTONOV-OVSEENKO, Vladimir Aleksandrovich (9 [21] March 1883: 10 February 1938). Born in officer’s family. In RSDRP, 1902–1917. Many arrests. In emigration, 1910–1917. Writer for *Golos*, *Nashe slovo*, *Nachalo* in Paris, 1914–1917. Returned to Petrograd in June 1917. Important role in military, 1917–1920. Head of Political Directorate of Red Army, 5 August 1922–12 January 1924. In Left Opposition from 1923. Diplomat in Czechoslovakia, 1924–1928. Broke with Opposition in December 1927. Diplomat in Latvia, 1928–1930; Poland, 1930–1934. General Consul in Spain, 1 October 1936–15 September 1937. People’s Commissar of Justice, RSFSR, 1937. Arrested 12 October 1937. Sentenced to death on 8 February 1938 and shot on 10 February. Rehabilitated in 1956.

AROSEV, Aleksandr Yakovlevich (25 May [6 June] 1890: 10 February 1938). Born in family of tailor. From 1905, Socialist Revolutionary. Participated in 1905 Revolution. Became a Bolshevik in 1907. Repeated arrest and exile. Fled abroad in 1909. Studied in France, 1910–1911 and then in Petrograd. In prison and exile 1911–1913. Mobilized in December 1916. In 1917, member of Military Revolutionary Committee in Moscow. In Red Army during Civil War. In 1920, chairman of Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal in Ukraine. From 1921, deputy director of Institute of History of the Party and Revolution [later Lenin Institute]. Worked in VChK until 1927. Diplomatic posts in Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, and France, 1927–1933. From 1934 to 1937, chairman of VOKS [All-Union Society of Foreign Cultural Ties]. Author of many historical and literary works. Delegate to First Writers’ Congress in 1934. Arrested on 3 July 1937. Shot on 10 February 1938, together with Antonov-Ovseenko at “Kommunarka.” Rehabilitated in 1956.

ASTROV, Valentin Nikolaevich (1 August 1898–15 July 1993). In 1915, expelled from school in Penza for revolutionary activity. From November 1917, editor of *Izvestiia Smolenskogo Soveta*. In 1919, editor of *Rabochii put’*. Wrote work on Economists in 1923. Finished IKP in 1926.

1924–1929, on editorial board of journal *Bolshevik*; 1927–1929, *Pravda*. Member of Bukharin school. In 1929, removed from IKP. In 1933 arrested as Rightist. Gave testimony against Bukharin both in 1933 and 1937. Freed on Stalin's orders. Fought in World War II. In 1949, sentenced to twenty-five years in corrective labor camp. Freed and rehabilitated in 1956. Wrote novel, *Krucha*, about struggle against Trotskyism in 1920s. Author of autobiographical trilogy, 1958, 1961, 1989. Died in Moscow, 1993.

BAUMAN, Karl Yanovich (17 [29] August 1892: 14 October 1937). Born in family of Latvian peasant. Bolshevik from 1907. Illegal work in Lemsal, Pskov, Kiev, Saratov. Participated in October Revolution in Kiev. Member of CC, 1925–1938 (removed posthumously in January 1938); candidate-member of Politburo, 29 April 1929–26 June 1930. Strong supporter of collectivization. Member of Orgburo, 1928–1932. Member of TsIK. 1931–1934, first secretary of Central Asian Bureau of CC. Arrested on 12 October 1937; beaten to death during interrogation in Lefortovo Prison on 14 October. Rehabilitated in 1955.

BLIUMKIN, Yakov Grigorievich [Simkha-Yankev Gershevich Bliumkin. Pseudonyms: Isaev, Maks, Vladimirov] (27 February 1900–3 November 1929). Born in Odessa. Member of Left SRs from 1917. In Cheka, June–July 1918. On 6 July 1918, murders Count Mirbach, German ambassador. Amnestied in April 1919. Joins RKP(b) in 1920. From 1922, works in Trotsky's secretariat at Revolutionary Military Council. From 1923 in OGPU. In April 1929 meets with Trotsky in Constantinople and agrees to work with Left Opposition. Returns to USSR in October 1929, with letter from Trotsky which Radek turns over to OGPU. Arrested in October, sentenced by OGPU “for betraying revolutionary army of the Cheka,” and shot on 3 November 1929.

BOGUSLAVSKY, Mikhail Solomonovich (1 [13] May 1886–1 February 1937). Born in tailor's family. Member of Jewish Socialist Party, 1904–1908. Participated in 1905 Revolution. In Jewish Socialist Workers' Party, 1905–1917. Joined Bolsheviks in October 1917. Leading party work in Voronezh, then Ukraine, 1919–1920. Democratic Centralist, 1920–1921. Signed “Declaration of 46” in October 1923. In Left Opposition, 1923–1929. Chairman of Maly Sovnarkom of RSFSR, 1924–1927. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927. Signed letter departing from Opposition on 27 October 1929. Reinstated in party, May 1930. Economic work in Siberia, 1930–1936. Arrested on 8 August 1936. Defendant at Second Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 30 January 1937 and shot on 1 February. Rehabilitated in 1987.

BUKHARIN, Nikolai Ivanovich (9 October 1888–15 March 1938). Member of party from 1906. Studied at Moscow University 1907–1911. In emigration 1911–1917. Candidate-member of Politburo 1919–1924; member of Politburo 2 June 1924: 17 November 1929. Member of CC 1917–1934. Editor of *Pravda*, 1918–1929; Executive Committee of Comintern 1919–1929; 1924–1929 editor of journal *Bolshevik*; 1934–1936 editor of *Izvestiia*. Allied with Stalin against Left Opposition, 1924–1927. Led Right Opposition against Stalin 1928–1929. Arrested in February 1937 and shot in March 1938. Rehabilitated legally on 3 February 1988, and along party lines on 21 June 1988.

- BUTOV, Georgy Vasilievich (?–October 1928). An engineer by training. Head of Trotsky's secretariat during the Civil War. Arrested in 1928. Refused to sign accusations against Trotsky and himself. Died in October 1928 during a fifty-day hunger strike in the Butyrki prison.
- CHAYANOV, Aleksandr Vasilievich (17 [29] January 1888–3 October 1937). Economist, sociologist, writer, utopian. Born in merchant's family. In 1906, entered Moscow Agricultural Institute. In 1912, research in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy. Leading activist in cooperative movement after February Revolution. From 1918, professor at Petrovsky Agricultural Academy. 1921–1923, member of Narkomzem and its representative in Gosplan. In 1929, accused of being agent of imperialism, supporter of Right Deviation. Arrested in July 1930, as part of fabricated Working-Peasants' Party. Sentenced to five years in prison on 16 January 1932. After four years in prison, exiled to Alma-Ata. Arrested in March 1937 and shot on 3 October 1937. Rehabilitated in 1987.
- DEBORIN [Ioffe], Abram Moiseevich (1881–1963). Born in Upyna, Lithuania. Joined the Bolsheviks in 1903. A Menshevik from 1907 to 1917. Graduated from the Philosophy Department at Bern University in 1908. After October 1917, taught at Sverdlov University, the Institute of Red Professors, and worked at the Marx-Engels Institute. Director of the Institute of Philosophy, 1924–1931. Main editor of *Under the Banner of Marxism*, 1926–1930. Leader of the “dialecticians” in the debates with the “mechanists.” Joined the Communist Party in 1928. Charged with “Menshevizing idealism” in January 1931. Member of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences, 1935–1945, but published relatively little compared to the period before 1931. In 1961, a major collection of his writings was published. Died in Moscow on 8 March 1963.
- DEMCHENKO, Nikolai Nesterovich (9 [21] May 1896–30 October 1937). Born in peasant family in Ukraine. In 1915, studied medicine at Kharkov University. Became Bolshevik in October 1916. After October Revolution, left university. Party work in Taganrog, Voronezh, Samara. Developed agricultural policy. Moved to Moscow in January 1922. In 1923, sent to Ukraine. 1930–1932, People's Commissar of Agriculture in Ukraine. Actively participated in collectivization. From September 1936, deputy Narkom of Agriculture. Arrested on 22 July 1937. Sentenced to death on 29 October and shot. Rehabilitated in 1954.
- DINGELSHTEDT, Fyodor Nikolaevich (1890–20 October 1943). Born in officer's family. In party from February 1910. Revolutionary work in Petersburg, Finland; at Kronstadt in 1917; Petrograd Committee 1917–1918; in Perm 1918–1919; Ufa, 1919. In Red Army, 1919–1920; in Turkestan 1921–1922; studied three years at IKP; teaches at University of Toilers of the East, 1924–1925. Author of many books on philosophy, economics and history. In Left Opposition, 1926–1930; signed “Declaration of 83” in May 1927. Expelled from party in 1927, arrested by OGPU, 1928; exiled to Siberia for three years; works as economist in forestry. Arrested on 30 May 1930, sentenced to corrective labor camp for three years; in Verkhneural'sk political isolator 1930–1935. Exiled for five years on 4 May 1935. Arrested in Alma-Ata on 25 May 1936; more exile.

Sentenced on 17 July 1943 to five years in corrective labor camp; dies on 20 October 1943. Rehabilitated in June 1994.

EISMONT, Nikolai Borisovich (4 December 1891–22 March 1935). Studied law at Petersburg University. Member of RSDRP from 1907. Party work in Barnaul, Tomsk, Petersburg. In 1912, exiled to Siberia. 1911–1917, member of “Mezhraionka.” In 1919–1920, head of supplies for Red Army. 1920–1926, Presidium of VSNKh of the RSFSR. 1926–1932, Commissar of Trade, RSFSR. On 24 November 1932, expelled from party; sentenced to three years in prison on 16 January 1933 in “Case of Eismont-Tolmachëv” (so-called “Rykov school”). Freed on 28 February 1935. Died in automobile accident on 22 March 1935. Rehabilitated in 1962 and 1963.

FRUMKIN, Moisei Ilyich (1878–28 July 1938). Born in family of a trader. In 1898 joined RSDRP. In 1900, founded joint Socialist Revolutionary-Social Democratic print shop in Tambov. From 1909, chairman of Central Bureau of Trade Unions in Moscow. From 1911, in exile. 1918–1922, party work in Siberia. 1922–1928, deputy People’s Commissar for Foreign Trade. 1928–1929, deputy People’s Commissar of Finance. Member of Right Opposition, 1928–1930. In June 1928, sent letter criticizing collectivization. 1932–1935, deputy People’s Commissar of Foreign Trade. Arrested on 23 October 1937. Shot on 28 July 1938 at “Kommunarka” shooting range. Rehabilitated 12 December 1956.

GALKIN, Pavel Adrianovich (26 June 1888–14 September 1937). Director of the 26th Moscow Printing Works. Member of the “Union of Marxist-Leninists.” Arrested 12 March 1937. Shot on 14 September 1937. Rehabilitated on 25 March 1958.

GAVEN, Yuri Petrovich [Yan Ernestovich Dauman] (18 March 1884–4 October 1936). Born in peasant family in Latvia. Expelled from seminary in 1902 for revolutionary activity. In Latvian SDRP. 1902–1905 propagandist. Participated in 1905 Revolution. Arrest and exile, 1908–1914. At Democratic Conference in September 1917 in Petrograd. Various party positions in Crimea. From 1924 in Moscow. Member of Presidium of Gosplan. In Left Opposition, 1926–1927. 1931–1933, director of Soviet oil trading firm in Germany. From 1933 on pension. In 1932, joined opposition “Group O.,” establishing ties with Trotsky. Arrested on 4 April 1936. Expelled from party on 16 May. Sentenced to death on 3 October 1936 and shot next day. Rehabilitated in 1958.

GOLTSMAN, Eduard Solomonovich (1882–25 August 1936). In revolutionary movement from 1900; member of RSDRP from 1903, Bolshevik. In Red Army 1919–1920. Worked abroad for People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs [NKID], 1923–1926, in Japan, Syria, Egypt, Palestine. In Left Opposition, 1926–1928; signed “Declaration of 83” in May 1927. Expelled from party, 16 May 1936. Arrested by NKVD in May 1936. Defendant at first Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 24 August 1936 and shot 25 August. Rehabilitated in 1988.

GROMAN, Vladimir Gustavovich (1874–1940). Statistician, member of Presidium of Gosplan. Born in family of teacher. Expelled from Moscow University for revolutionary activity in 1896. In RSDRP from 1898. Menshevik. In 1919–1920, worked in Supreme Council of National



Economy [VSNKh]. In 1922, left RSDRP. Participated in Genoa Conference in 1922. In Gosplan, 1921–1928. Arrested in 1930 in the case of the “Union Bureau of the TsK RSDRP(m).” Sentenced by OGPU on 9 March 1931 to ten years in prison. Served term in Verkhneuralsk political isolator, then Suzdal corrective labor camp [ITL], where he died on 11 March 1940.

IKRAMOV, Akmal Ikramovich (1898–13 March 1938). Born in peasant family in Tashkent. Uzbek. Joins RKP(b) in 1918. 1921–1922 in CC of party in Turkmenistan. 1922, studied at Sverdlov University. From March 1925, secretary of CC in Uzbekistan. 1925–1934, candidate-member of CC. 1929–1937 first secretary of CC in Uzbekistan. Actively participated in Stalinist repressions in 1937. Arrested in February 1937. Defendant at Third Moscow Trial. Shot on 13 March 1938 at “Kommunarka.” Rehabilitated on 3 June 1957.

KAIUROV, Vasily Nikolaevich (1876–11 September 1936). Member of RSDRP from 1898, Bolshevik from 1903. Until 1912, worked in factory in Sormovo; participated in armed uprising there in 1905. From 1912–1917, illegal activity in Petrograd. Active participant in February Revolution. Hid Lenin at his apartment in July 1917. In Red Army during Civil War. Economic work in 1920s. From 1926, in Moscow. 1926–1930, in Rabkrin. In Istpart, and in 1930–32, headed planning commission of Central Archive. Founding member of the Union of Marxist-Leninists (the Riutin group) in 1932. Arrested on 15 September 1932. Expelled from party 9 October 1932. Sentenced to three years of exile. Arrested on 4 November 1935 and sentenced to three years exile in Kazakhstan on 14 February 1936. Died in exile on 11 September 1936. His son, Aleksandr, was shot on 13 August 1937, for being a member of the Riutin group. Rehabilitated on 21 September 1989.

KAMENEV, Lev Borisovich [Rozenfeld] (6 [18] July 1883–25 August 1936). Born in Moscow in family of railway worker, then engineer. In RSDRP from 1901. Joined *Iskra* group in Paris in 1902; moved to Switzerland. Returned to Russia in 1903. Arrested many times. Member of Petersburg Committee, 1905–1907. Member of Foreign Bolshevik Center, 1908–1914. Arrested in 1914 and sent into exile in Siberia in 1915. Returned to Petrograd in 1917. Editor of *Pravda*, April–October 1917. On 10 October 1917, opposed armed uprising. Participant in peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk, November–December 1917. Imprisoned in Finland, January–August 1918. Many leading posts in Soviet period. Chairman of Mossovet, 1918–1926; from 1922, deputy chairman of SNK and STO. Member of CC, 1917–1927; member of Politburo, 1919–1926. With Zinoviev and Stalin against Trotsky 1922–1924. Joined United Opposition in April 1926. In October 1926, removed from Politburo, and in October 1927, from CC. In December 1927 expelled from party. Diplomat in Italy, November 1926–January 1928. In June 1928, reinstated in party. In October 1932, expelled for reading “Riutin Platform.” Exiled to Minusinsk. In December 1933, reinstated in party; worked at Academia Publishing house. Arrested in January 1935, sentenced to five years in prison. Defendant at First Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 24 August 1936, and shot next day. Rehabilitated in 1988. His first wife,

Olga Davidovna Kameneva (Trotsky's younger sister), was shot on 11 September 1941 near Orel; their two sons were also shot: Aleksandr Lvovich (1906–15 July 1939) and Yurii Lvovich (1921–30 January 1938).

KANEL, Aleksandra Yulianovna (1876–1936). Born in Kiev, studied in Paris. Returned to Russia in 1897. From 1918–1935, main physician at Kremlin Polyclinic № 1. Treated Lenin, Krupskaya, Kalinin, Kamenev, Alliluyeva; close friends with E. Kalinina, O. Kameneva, P. Zhemchuzhina. Died on 8 February 1936 from meningitis.

KAREV, Nikolai Afanasievich (1891–11 October 1936). Born in Posvol of the Koven Province. Prolific philosopher of the Deborin school. Full member of the Institute, and head of the section on dialectical materialism. Arrested in March 1933. Sentenced on 16 April 1933 by a Collegium of the OGPU to three years of prison. In 1935 exiled to Ufa. Arrested in May 1936. Sentenced on 10 October 1936 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. Shot on 11 October 1936. Rehabilitated on 3 December 1961 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. Reinstated in CPSU on 17 October 1989.

KASPAROVA, Varsenika Dzhavadovna (1888–11 September 1941). Teacher. Member of Bolshevik Party from 1904. Military Commissar during Civil War. 1924–1925, member of women's secretariat of Executive Committee of Comintern. Member of TsIK in 1927. In Left Opposition. Expelled from party in 1928. Arrested in 1936 and sentenced on 10 April 1937 to ten years in corrective labor camp. Sentenced on 6 September 1941 to be executed. Shot along with 160 others near Orel prison on 11 September 1941. Rehabilitated in 1961.

KIRSHON, Vladimir Mikhailovich (6 [19] August 1902–28 July 1938). Writer and playwright. Born in lawyer's family. In Red Army from 1918, party from 1920. Studied at Sverdlov University in 1923. Close to Yagoda. From 1925, one of secretaries of RAPP. Enemy of fellow-travelers. Glorified Stalin in his plays. Praised collectivization. On 26 May 1937, expelled from leadership of Union of Writers. Arrested on 29 August 1937. Sentenced to death on 21 April 1938; shot on 28 July 1938. Rehabilitated in 1955.

KOLOTILOV, Nikolai Nikolaevich (1 [13] May 1885–13 August 1937). Member of party from 1903. In 1904, Ivanovo-Voznesensk; participated in 1905 Revolution. Organized armed guards with Frunze, and seventy-two-day strike in Ivanovo. From 1918, editor of newspaper *Rabochii krai*. In 1923, candidate-member of CC; 1924–1934, in CC. 1932–1937, Commissariat of Education. Arrested on 9 March 1937. Shot on 13 August 1937.

KONDRATIEV, Nikolai Dmitrievich (4 [16] March 1892–17 September 1938). Born in peasant family. From 1905, studied at seminary. Became SR in 1905, expelled from seminary in December 1906. Moved to Petersburg in 1908. Finished law studies at Petersburg University in 1911. In 1913, arrested and briefly imprisoned. After February Revolution, secretary under Kerensky for agricultural affairs. Delegate at Third Congress of SRs in May-June 1917. After October 1917, remains an SR. In 1919, leaves party and devotes himself to scientific research. Teaches in Moscow from 1918. In People's Commissariat of Finance, 1920–1928. In 1920–

1923, in Narkomzem. Worked in agricultural sector of Gosplan. In 1922, avoided deportation through intervention by V. Osinsky. In 1924, travels to USA, England, Canada and Germany. Publishes works on economic cycles. Attacked by Zinoviev and Stalin for supporting kulaks. Arrested in 1930 in the case of the Working Peasants' Party. On 26 January 1932, sentenced to eight years in prison. Served sentence in Suzdal political isolator. Sentenced to death on 17 September 1938 and shot on same day at "Kommunarka." Rehabilitated secretly in 1963 and publicly in 1987.

KOSIOR, Stanislav Vikentievich (6 [18] November 1889–26 February 1939). Born in factory workers' family in Vengruv (now Poland). Participated in strikes in 1905. Joined RSDRP in 1907. 1912–1914, illegal work in Kharkov, Kiev, Poltava. Exiled in 1915 for three years in Irkutsk. In 1917, member of Petersburg Committee. "Left communist" in 1918. From 1918, leading party work in Ukraine. Member of CC from 1924. Member of Orgburo, 1925–1928. From 1928 to 1938, secretary of party in Ukraine. One of those responsible for devastating famine in 1932–1933 in Ukraine. In Politburo from 1930. Arrested on 3 May 1938 and charged with being member of "Polish Military Organization." Sentenced and shot on 26 February 1939. Rehabilitated in 1956.

KOSIOR, Vladislav [Vladimir] Vikentievich (8 August 1891–30 March 1938). Born in Vengruv (now Poland). Participated in 1905 Revolution. Joined RSDRP in 1906. Revolutionary work in Donbass, Kharkov, Kiev, Petrograd and Moscow. Five years in prison and more than two years in exile. After February Revolution, on Petrograd Committee. During Civil War, in Red Army. In metal workers' union 1919–1922. 1922–1924, editor of newspaper *Trud* [Labor]. In 1921, joined "Democratic Centralists." Signed "Declaration of 46"; in Left Opposition from 1923. Removed from *Trud* for opposition activity. 1925–1926, representative of Vneshtorgbank in Paris. In May 1928, expelled from party and exiled to Pokrovsk. Sentenced to five years in political isolator and exile in Siberia. On 10 July 1936, sentenced to five years in corrective labor camp. Participated in hunger strike of Oppositionists at camp in Vorkuta. Arrested on 10 December 1937 and sentenced to death on 11 January 1938. Shot with other Oppositionists on 30 March 1938 in Vorkuta.

KRESTINSKY, Nikolai Nikolaevich (13 [25] October 1883–15 March 1938). Born in family of teacher in Mogilev. Member of party from 1903. Finished law program at Petersburg University in 1907. Revolutionary work in Vilno, Kovno, Vitebsk, Petersburg. Arrested and exiled many times. In 1917–1918, People's Commissariat of Finances, RSFSR; in 1918, deputy chairman of People's Bank, commissar of justice in Petrograd. Member of Politburo, 1919–1921; member of Orgburo, 1919–1921; member of Secretariat of CC, 1919–1921. For many years, member of TsIK. In 1921–1930 ambassador to Germany. In Left Opposition 1923–1927. Broke with the opposition in 1927, but conducted correspondence with Trotsky and Rakovsky. 1930–1937, deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs. Arrested on 20 May 1937. Defendant at Third

Moscow Trial; sentenced to death on 13 March 1938 and shot on 15 March. Rehabilitated in 1963.

KRUPSKAYA [Ulyanova], Nadezhda Konstantinovna (26 February 1869–27 February 1939). Born in Petersburg in officer's family. Finished Higher Women's Courses in 1895. In party from 1898. Lenin's wife. 1907–1917 in emigration. Leading positions in People's Commissariat of Education, 1918–1939. Member of CC, 1927–1939. Member of CCC 1924–1927, Presidium of CCC, 1924–1926. Editor of journal, *Kommunistka*, 1920–1930. Member of TsIK. Buried on Red Square in Moscow.

LEVIN, Lev Grigorievich (1870–15 March 1938). Born in Odessa. Finished medical studies in Moscow in 1896. Spent year in Germany. Worked in several hospitals in Moscow, including Kremlin hospital. Treated Gorky, Lenin, Dzerzhinsky, Molotov, Yagoda, many other party figures. Arrested on 2 December 1937. Defendant at Third Moscow Trial, falsely accused of murdering Gorky. Shot on 15 March 1938 at "Kommunarka." Rehabilitated in 1988.

LOMINADZE, Vissarion [Beso] Vissarionovich (6 June 1897–19 January 1935). Born in teacher's family in Georgia. From 1913, in social-democratic student groups. Member of Petrograd Committee in 1917. Revolutionary activity in Kutaisi 1917–1918. Arrested in 1919, sent to Baku. Participated in suppression of Kronstadt rebellion. CC in Georgia, 1922–1924. Studied at Communist Academy 1924–1925. Secretary of Ispolkom of the Comintern of Communist Youth [KIM], 1925–1926. Candidate member of CC, 1925–1930. Full member in 1930. One of organizers of Syrtsov-Lominadze opposition group in 1930. Expelled from CC on 1 December 1930. Reinstated in party in 1931. In 1932, underground opposition work with Yan Sten, ended in fall 1932. Magnitogorsk Party Committee, August 1933–19 January 1935. Expecting arrest by NKVD, shot himself on 19 January 1935.

LUPPOL, Ivan Kapitonovich (1896–26 May 1943). Born in Rostov-on-the-Don. Finished law program at Moscow University in 1919 and philosophy program at IKP in 1924. Worked at Marx-Engels Institute, Moscow State University and IKP. Full member of Philosophy Institute. Director of the Gorky Institute of World Literature, 1935–1940. Specialist in dialectics, history of philosophy, aesthetics, and literature. Wrote dissertation on Diderot. Arrested at the end of February 1941. Sentenced to be shot. From 29 October 1941 held on death row at the Saratov prison. In July 1942, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR changed his death sentence to imprisonment at a corrective labor camp of the NKVD for a term of twenty years. Transferred to a common cell, and then sent to camps in Mordova. Died on 26 May 1943. Rehabilitated on 26 May 1956 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR.

MARETSKY, Dmitry Petrovich (1901–26 May 1937). Born in Moscow. Member of party 1919–1932. Studied at IKP for three years. Member of editorial board of *Pravda*, 1924–1929. Taught at IKP, 1924–1928. Member of Right Opposition, 1928–1929. At Academy of Sciences in Leningrad, 1929–1931. Expelled from party on 2 April 1931 for "right deviation." Reinstated in party 8 May 1931. On 9 October 1932, expelled from party; arrested by OGPU on 27 September



1932 for distributing documents of Riutin group. Sentenced on 11 October 1932 to two years of exile. Arrested in April 1933. On 16 April 1933 sentenced to five years in corrective labor camp. At Verkhneuralsk political isolator. Arrested on 5 November 1936; sentenced to death on 26 May 1936 and shot same day along with his brother, G. P. Maretsky, a teacher at Moscow Polygraphical Institute. Rehabilitated in 1959, and along party lines in 1989.

MAZNIN, Dmitry Mikhailovich (26 October [8 November] 1902–29 October 1937). Poet, literary critic. Born in Petersburg. Member of RKP(b) from 1920. Member of RAPP. Arrested in 1936. Served sentence in Kolyma. On 14 September 1937, sentenced for “counter-revolutionary Trotskyist activity” and shot. Rehabilitated in April 1956.

MOLCHANOV, Georgy Andreevich (22 March [3 April] 1897–9 October 1937). High-ranking member of VChK, OGPU, NKVD. Suppressed Trotskyists, peasants opposed to collectivization, Right Oppositionists, others. Led arrests of Riutin supporters in October 1932, and members of Ivan Nikitich Smirnov’s group at end of 1932. Organized arrests and trials after Kirov’s assassination, 1935–1936. Arrested in February 1937 and shot on 9 October 1937. Not rehabilitated.

MRACHKOVSKY, Sergei Vitalievich (15 [27] June 1888–25 August 1936). Born in family of political exile, railway worker. In party from 1905. Repeatedly arrested. In 1917, member of Ekaterinburg Soviet. In Red Army during Civil War, prominently in Siberia. From 1925, economic work. In Left Opposition from 1923; leader of Opposition in Urals. Signed “Declaration of 83” in May 1927. Expelled from party in October 1927. On 13 January 1928, sentenced to three years exile. In 1930, broke from opposition and reinstated in party. May 1932–August 1933, in charge of building Baikal-Amur Mainline. In 1932, in I. N. Smirnov’s underground group. Arrested in 1933; sent to Akmolinsk. Arrested on 25 January 1935 and sentenced to five years in prison. Defendant at First Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 24 August 1936 and shot next day. Rehabilitated on 13 July 1988. His brother, Leonid Vitalievich, also in Left Opposition, shot on 25 March 1937; his sons, Viacheslav and Leonid, shot on 1 April 1937.

MURALOV, Nikolai Ivanovich (1877–1 February 1937). Born in peasant family. In RSDRP from 1903. Participant in armed uprising in Moscow, December 1905. In army, 1915–November 1917. Leading positions in Red Army, 1918–1927. From 1925, in CCC. Rector of Agricultural Academy, 1925–27. Leading member of Left Opposition. Expelled from party in December 1927. Exiled in February 1928. Arrested on 17 April 1936. Tortured for several months. Defendant at Second Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 30 January and shot on 1 February 1937. Rehabilitated in April 1986.

ORDZHONIKIDZE, Grigory Konstantinovich [Sergo] (12 [24] October 1886–18 February 1937). Born in Georgia in poor aristocratic family. Member of RSDRP from 1903. Active in 1905 Revolution in Caucasus. Arrested and exiled several times. Elected to CC at Prague Conference in January 1912. Returned to Petrograd in June 1917. Participated in October Revolution. In Red

Army during Civil War. Member of CC, 1912–1917, 1921–1927 and 1934–1937. In 1926–1930, chairman of CCC, People's Commissar of RKI [Worker-Peasant Inspectorate] and deputy chairman of Sovnarkom. From 1930, chairman of VSNKh; 1932–1937, People's Commissar of Heavy Industry. From 1930–1937, member of Politburo. One of Stalin's closest supporters. Reported to have opposed persecution of Old Bolsheviks. Committed suicide on 18 February 1937, on eve of February-March Plenum of CC.

OSTROVSKAYA, Nadezhda Ilyinichna (1881–4 November 1937). Born in family of physician. Joined RSDRP in 1901. Member of Yalta Party Committee in 1905; active participant in revolution in Crimea 1905–1907. Propaganda work among sailors in Sevastopol in 1907. In emigration, 1907–1914, in Paris and Geneva. 1917, revolutionary activity in Crimea, Sevastopol. Moved to Petrograd in December 1917. Secretary of High Command. Responsible party work during Civil War. In Left Opposition. In 1928 expelled from party. Arrested on 22 February 1933 and sentenced to three years of exile. Arrested again on 20 October 1935. Sentenced on 20 November 1936 to ten years in prison. Shot on 4 November 1937.

PETROVSKY, Pyotr Grigorievich (1899–8 September 1941). Born worker's family. Member of party from 1916–1932. In Petrograd 1917; participated in storming of Winter Palace. In Red Army during Civil War. Leading figure in Komsomol, 1922–1926. Illegal party work in Germany, 1925. Fought “New Opposition,” 1926–1927. In Saratov, 1929–1932. Arrested 28 September 1932 for “right-Trotskyist activity.” From 1932, in exile in Aktiubinsk. Arrested in April 1933, sentenced to three years in corrective labor camp [ITL]. Released in 1934. Editor at OGIZ, 1934–1937. Arrested in February 1937. In ITL, November 1937–September 1941. On 8 September 1941, sentenced to death and shot same day. Rehabilitated in 1958 and posthumously reinstated in party in 1959.

PLETNEV, Dmitry Dmitrievich (1871–11 September 1941). Russian physician and medical researcher. Member of Cadet Party. Worked at major clinics in Moscow. Treated Lenin, Krupskaya, many party leaders. Frequently traveled to medical conferences in Europe. Arrested in 1937, falsely charged with murder of Gorky and Kuibyshev. Sentenced at Third Moscow Trial in 1938 to twenty-five years in prison. Shot along with 160 other prisoners near Orel on 11 September 1941. Rehabilitated 5 April 1985.

POKROVSKY, Mikhail Nikolaevich (17 [29] August 1868–10 April 1932). Born in family of government official. Finished Moscow University in 1891. In RSDRP from 1905. Participated in armed uprising in Moscow, December 1905. In emigration, 1908–1917. With Bogdanov's “Vpered” group, 1909–1911. Returned to Russia in August 1917. In Moscow during October Revolution. Participated in peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk in 1917. With “left communists” in 1918. Deputy People's Commissar of Education, 1918–1932. Chairman of Communist Academy, rector of Institute of Red Professors from 1921. Critical of Trotsky's writings on history, especially *Results and Prospects* and *1905*. Editor of several history journals and author of many historical works. Member of CCC, 1930–1932. Died from cancer in 1932.

Works sharply criticized by article in *Pravda* on 27 January 1936. Denounced in Stalin's *Short Course* in 1938; books removed from libraries. Gradual rehabilitation after Twentieth Party Congress in 1956. Four-volume set of works published, 1965–1967.

POSTYSHEV, Pavel Petrovich (6 [18] September 1887–26 February 1939). Born in worker's family in Ivanovo-Voznesensk. In RSDRP from 1904. Wounded in Ivanovo-Voznesensk during strike in June 1905. Arrested and exiled many times. From March 1917, deputy chairman of Irkutsk Soviet. In 1919, participant in partisan movement. From 1923, party work in Ukraine. 1930–1933, secretary of CC. Carried out extreme measures during famine in Ukraine. Candidate-member of Politburo from 1934. Arrested along with wife on 22 February 1938. Both shot on 26 February 1939 in Butyrki prison. Rehabilitated in 1956.

POZNANSKY, Igor Moiseevich (1897–30 March 1938). Student in Kazan, Perm, Petrograd. Joined party in June 1917. In Red Army, 1918–1925. Trotsky's secretary in military and at Glavkontsesskom, 1925–1928. Active in Left Opposition, 1925–1930. Arrested by OGPU in February 1928 and sentenced to exile in North. Arrested for trying to accompany Trotsky to Alma-Ata. Sentenced in 1930 to corrective labor camp [ITL]. In Verkhneuralsk political isolator, 1930–31. In prison camp, 1936–1938. Sentenced to death by NKVD on 11 January 1938. Shot on 30 March.

PREOBRAZHENSKY, Evgeny Alekseevich (15 [27] February 1886–13 July 1937). Born in priest's family. In party from October 1903. Participated in 1905 Revolution in Orel, then in Moscow in November–December, including armed uprising. On 18 March 1906, arrested in Perm. Released in August. 1908–1917, party work in Siberia; arrests and exile. In Urals, 1918–1920; on editorial board of *Pravda*. With “left communists” in 1918. From 5 April 1920–16 March 1921, secretary of CC. Economic work, 1921–1924. 1924–1927, deputy chairman of Glavkontsesskom; 1926–1928, editorial board of *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. From 1923, one of leading members of Left Opposition. Expelled from party in 1927, and exiled to Kazakhstan in January 1928. In July 1929, joined Radek and Smilga in breaking with Opposition. Reinstated in party in January 1930. In 1931–1932, rejoined I. N. Smirnov in opposition work. People's Commissariat of Light Industry, 1932–1933. In January 1933, expelled from party and arrested. On 16 January 1933, sentenced to three years of exile in Kazakhstan. In December 1933, reinstated in party. 1933–1936, economic work. Arrested in December 1936. Sentenced to death on 13 July 1937 and shot same day. Rehabilitated in 1988 and 1990. Author of many theoretical works, including *The ABCs of Communism* (with Bukharin, 1919), and *The New Economics* (1926).

PYATAKOV, Georgii [Yurii] Leonidovich (6 [18] August 1890–1 February 1937). Born in family of factory director. Participated in 1905 Revolution in Kiev. Close to anarchists. Studied economics at Petersburg University. Entered RSDRP in 1910. Arrested several times. Exile in Irkutsk Province. Emigrated to Switzerland in 1915. Worked with Lenin on journal *Kommunist*. Moved to Sweden, then Norway. From April 1917, Kiev Committee of RSDRP. A Left

Communist during Brest debates. Leading party work in Ukraine, 1918–1919. In Revvoensovet during Civil War. From 1920, economic work. 1921–1923, candidate-member of CC. From March 1922, deputy chairman of Gosplan. From 1923, active member of Left Opposition. 1923–1927, member of CC, deputy chairman of VSNKh. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927. Broke with opposition on 28 February 1928. Reinstated in party in 1928. Worked at Gosbank and VSNKh. Deputy People's Commissar for Heavy Industry, 1931–1936. Arrested on 13 September 1936. Severely beaten during interrogations. Defendant at Second Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 30 January 1937 and shot 1 February. Rehabilitated in 1988. Second wife, Liudmila Fyodorovna Ditiatova, shot on 20 June 1937 and rehabilitated on 11 June 1991.

RADEK, Karl Berggardovich [Sobelson] (1885–19 May 1939). Born in Lvov in family of teacher. Finished Krakow University. Participated in Social-Democratic movement in Galicia, Poland and Germany; from 1917 in Russia. Participated in Zimmerwald Conference. Member of party, 1917–1927 and 1929–1936. Member of CC, 1919–1924. In 1918–1920, illegal work in Germany. Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern [ECCI], 1920–1923. Head of the Eastern Department of the ECCI, 1923–1924; rector of the University of Toilers of the East, 1925–1927. In Left Opposition, 1924–1929. Signed “Declaration of 83” in May 1927. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927. Arrested by OGPU in January 1928. 1928–1929 in exile. Reinstated in party, 1930. In 1929–1930, on editorial board of *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*. 1930–1932, deputy editor of the journal *Za rubezhom* [Abroad]. 1932–1936, headed international information bureau in the CC. Expelled from party on 7 October 1936. Defendant at Second Moscow Trial; sentenced on 30 January 1937 to ten years in corrective labor camp. Murdered by NKVD in Verkhneuralsk political isolator on 19 May 1939. Rehabilitated in 1988.

RAFAIL [Farbman], Rafail Borisovich (1893–1966). Born in family of cab driver. In party from 1910. Arrested in 1914 and exiled. In Red Army, 1918. Party work in Ukraine 1919–1922. Member of Democratic Centralists, 1920–1921. In Left Opposition, 1925–1928. Expelled from party 18 December 1927. Exiled to Siberia, 1928–1930. Broke with opposition 28 May 1930. Worked in Moscow 1931–1932 in metal industry. Reinstated in party 1932. Member of underground Trotskyist group led by I. N. Smirnov, 1932–13 January 1933. Arrested and expelled from party. Sentenced on 16 April 1933 to three years in corrective labor camp [ITL]. In Verkhneuralsk political isolator, 1933–1934. Sentenced to five years in ITL. Arrested in 1935; spent 1935–1956 in ITL. Freed in 1956. Lived as pensioner in Moscow. Died in 1966. Rehabilitated in 1989.

RAKOVSKY, Khristian Georgievich (1 August 1873–11 September 1941). Born in family of Bulgarian merchant. In Social-Democracy from 1890. Participated in revolutionary movement in Balkans, France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine. Emigrated to Geneva in 1890; began medical studies. In 1896, finished medical school in Montpellier, France. From 1903–1917, tried to reconcile Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Member of International Socialist Bureau, 1907–1914. One of organizers of Zimmerwald Conference in September 1915. Supported newspaper *Nashe*



*Slovo*, edited by Martov and Trotsky in Paris, 1914–1916. In Stockholm during October Revolution. Joined RSDRP(b) in November 1917; party work in Odessa and Petrograd. 1919–July 1923, chairman of SNK and People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs in Ukraine. From 1919 through 1927, member of CC. Participated in Genoa Conference in 1922. Ambassador in England, 1923–1925. October 1925–October 1927, trade representative in France. From 1923, leading member of Left Opposition. In 1927, removed from all posts, expelled from CC on 14 November and from party also in November. In January 1928, sentenced to four years in exile in Kustanai; in 1931, sentenced to four more years of exile in Barnaul. In 1935, broke from Opposition with Sosnovsky. Returned to Moscow and reinstated in party in November 1935. Expelled from party in 1936. Arrested on 27 January 1937, after lengthy letter from Yezhov to Stalin seeking his arrest. Defendant at Third Moscow Trial. Sentenced on 13 March 1938 to twenty years in prison. Shot near Orel on 11 September 1941 with 160 other prisoners. Rehabilitated in 1988.

RASKOLNIKOV, Fyodor Fyodorovich [Ilyin] (28 January [9 February] 1892–12 September 1939). Born to archdeacon. Entered Petersburg Polytechnical Institute in 1909. Joined Bolsheviks in 1910. 1912–1914, wrote for newspapers *Zvezda* and *Pravda*. Lieutenant in fleet in 1917. Deputy chairman of Kronstadt Soviet after February Revolution. Freed from Kresty Prison in October 1917. Fought in Petrograd and Moscow. In spring 1918, deputy People’s Commissar for Naval Affairs. Captured by British in December 1918. Exchanged for British prisoners on 27 May 1919. After Civil War, diplomat in Afghanistan, 1921–1923. Supported Left Opposition, 1923–1924. Eastern Department of Comintern, 1924–1927. In 1930–1933 in Estonia, then Denmark; in 1934–April 1938 in Bulgaria. In April 1938, became “non-returnee,” moved to Paris with wife and son. Sentenced to death in absentia on 17 July 1939. Wrote famous letter denouncing Stalin on 17 August 1939. Went into shock on 24 August 1939, upon learning of Stalin-Hitler Pact. Died in psychiatric clinic in Nice on 12 September 1939. Rehabilitated in 1963; letter to Stalin published in late 1980s in Soviet Union. First wife was Larisa Reisner (1895–1926).

RIAZANOV [Goldendakh], David Borisovich (1870–1938). Born in Odessa. In the revolutionary movement from 1887. Spent many years in prison and abroad. Wrote for *Pravda* in Vienna with Trotsky before the war, then for *Nashe slovo* in Paris. Returned to Russia in 1917 and joined the Mezhraiontsy. Founder in 1921 and first director of the Institute of Marx and Engels. Full member of the Institute of Philosophy. Close friends with Deborin. In February 1931 arrested “for having links to Mensheviks” and sentenced to exile in Saratov for three years. Worked at Saratov State University. On 23 July 1937 arrested again. On 21 January 1938 sentenced by a traveling session of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR, and shot the same day. Rehabilitated on 22 March 1958 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. In September 1989 rehabilitated along party lines.

RIUTIN, Martemian Nikitich (1 [13] February 1890–10 January 1937). Born in peasant family. In 1908 finished seminary in Irkutsk. In revolutionary movement from 1912, RSDRP from 1913. In 1917, chairman of Soviet in Kharbin. In Red Army during Civil War in Irkutsk. From 1920, party work in Siberia. 1923–1924, in Dagestan. In 1924, moves to Moscow; through 1927, one of leading figures against the Left Opposition. Breaks up meetings. Calls Left Opposition “social-democratic deviation” at Fifteenth Party Congress. 1928–1930, deputy editor of newspaper *Red Star*. In 1928, supports Right Opposition. Expelled from party on 23 September 1930. Arrested on 15 November 1930. On 17 January 1931, OGPU declares him innocent. In 1932, founds “Union of Marxist-Leninists” with Kaiurov, Galkin, M. Ivanov and others. Arrested by OGPU on 22 September 1932. Stalin proposes death penalty; Kirov objects. On 11 October 1932, sentenced to eight years in corrective labor camp. Attempts suicide. In Suzdal and Verkhneuralsk political isolators, October 1932–1935. Arrested in 1935 and held in inner NKVD prison, 1935–January 1937. Sentenced to death on 10 January 1937 and shot same day with eleven other members of the “Riutin group.” Rehabilitated in 1988. Wife Evdokia died in prison in 1947; son Vasily shot in 1939; son Vissarion arrested in 1935 and shot in 1937. Daughter Liubov survived Karlag [prison camp in Karaganda] and fought for father’s rehabilitation.

RUDZUTAK, Yan Ernestovich (3 [15] August 1887–29 July 1938). Born in Latvian peasant family. In RSDRP from 1905. In 1909, sentenced to ten years of hard labor. Freed from Butyrki Prison by February Revolution. Member of CC, 1920–1937; member of Politburo, 1926–1932; candidate-member, 1923–1926, 1934–1937; member of Orgburo, 1921–1924. Deputy secretary of SNK and STO, 1926–1937. Arrested on 25 May 1937 and falsely accused of heading secret Latvian nationalist group. Shot on 29 July 1938. Rehabilitated in 1955.

RYKOV, Aleksei Ivanovich (13 [25] 1881–15 March 1938). Born in Saratov, son of petty merchant. In party from 1898. Party work in Yaroslavl, Kostroma, Nizhny Novgorod, Moscow, Petersburg, Odessa. Participated in 1905 Revolution. Repeatedly arrested and exiled. Spent several months in Europe in 1909. Member of Moscow Soviet in 1917. 1918–1921, chairman of Supreme Economic Council of RSFSR. 1919–1920, in Council of Labor and Defense. 1924–1930, chairman of the Council of National Economy. Active opponent of Left Opposition, 1923–1927. Along with Voroshilov, voted for Trotsky’s arrest. One of leaders of Right Opposition, 1928–1929. Member of CC, 1905–1907, 1917–1918, 1920–1934 (candidate-member 1907–1912, 1934–1937). Member of Politburo, 1922–1930. Member of Orgburo, 1920–1924. Arrested on 27 February 1937. Defendant at Third Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 13 March 1938 and shot on 15 March. Rehabilitated in 1988.

SAFAROV, Georgii Ivanovich (1891–27 July 1942). Born in family of Armenian architect. In Social-Democratic circles, 1905. Joined RSDRP in 1908. Emigrated in 1910, secretary of Zurich section of Bolsheviks. Returned in 1912 to Petersburg; arrested. Fled to France. Deported from France to Switzerland in 1916. Returned to Russia with Lenin and Zinoviev in “sealed train” in 1917. Worked at *Pravda*. Member of Petersburg Committee. In Urals in 1918. In “military

opposition,” 1919. In Turkestan, 1919–1920. Member of Ispolkom of the Comintern, 1922–24. Candidate-member of CC, 1921–1925. Supporter of Zinoviev in “New Opposition” in 1925. From 1926 in United Opposition. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927; arrested and exiled for four years to Achinsk. Broke with Opposition on 9 November 1928. Reinstated in party. 1930–1934, headed Eastern Bureau of Comintern. Arrested on 25 December 1934. Exiled for two years on 16 January 1935. Arrested on 16 December 1936 and sentenced to five years in prison. In 1938–1940, worked as provocateur for NKVD; named 111 alleged oppositionists. Shot on 27 July 1942. Rehabilitation rejected in 1957, 1958 and 1962; granted in 1991.

SAPRONOV, Timofei Vladimirovich (1887–28 September 1937). Born in peasant family. In revolutionary movement from 1905. Joined party in 1912. Arrested and exiled for revolutionary activity. In Moscow for October Revolution. 1918–1919, chairman of Executive Committee of Moscow Provincial Soviet; in 1919–1920 in Kharkov. One of leaders of “Democratic Centralist” group, 1920–1921. Member of CC 1922–1923; member of Central Executive Committee, 1919–1924. In Left Opposition, 1923–1928. 1925–1926 member of Glavkontsesskom. Signed “Declaration of 83” in May 1927. Expelled as Trotskyist on 18 December 1927. From 1927, in prison and exile. Arrested in 1935, imprisoned in Verkhneuralsk political isolator from 1935 to August 1937. Sentenced by Military Collegium of Supreme Court and shot on 28 September 1937. Rehabilitated on 28 March 1990.

SEDOV, Lev Lvovich [Leon] (24 February 1906–16 February 1938). First son of Lev Trotsky and Natalia Sedova. Lived with parents in emigration in Vienna, Zurich, Paris, Barcelona, New York. Returned with parents to Russia in May 1917. Member of Komsomol from 1919. Studied at “Rabfak” [Workers School], 1920–21; Bauman Technical School in Moscow, September 1922–January 1928. Active in Left Opposition from 1923. Organized students, including Trotskyist group at Moscow State University. Arrested by OGPU in 1928. In exile with Trotsky in Alma-Ata, January 1928–January 1929. Went into exile with parents to Turkey in 1929. Editor of *Bulletin of the Opposition* in Berlin, then in Paris after Hitler came to power in 1933. Main organizer of Trotskyist movement in Europe leading up to founding of Fourth International in 1938. Relentlessly pursued by Soviet NKVD agents, including Mark Zborowski. Died in Paris clinic after appendix operation; was visited by Soviet agents who were instrumental in his death. His brother, Sergei Lvovich Sedov (1908–1937), was shot in the Soviet Union on 29 October 1937.

SERMUKS, Nikolai Martynovich (1896–1937). In Red Army, 1919–January 1925. Trotsky’s secretary. During the Civil War, in charge of Trotsky’s military train. Secretary at Glavkontsesskom for Trotsky. Actively participated in Moscow Trotskyist Center 1926–1928. Accompanied Trotsky into exile in 1928, but was immediately arrested and sent to the far North. Executed in 1937.

SHKLOVSKY, Grigory Lvovich (1875–4 November 1937). In party from 1898. Arrested in 1903; exiled 1903–1904. Delegate to Third Congress of RSDRP in 1905. Knew Lenin, Krupskaya,

Kamenev, Babushkin. Studied five years at Bern University, graduating as chemical engineer in 1915. Returned to Russia in 1917. Soviet diplomat in 1918. Consul in Hamburg 1922–1924. In Left Opposition, 1923–1928. Worked in chemical industry 1924–26. Expelled from party in 1927, reinstated in 1929. More work in chemical industry. Expelled from party on 16 May 1936. Sentenced to ten years in corrective labor camps on 14 November 1936. In prison at Solovki, 1936–1937. Sentenced to death on 10 October 1937 and executed on 4 November 1937.

SHLIAPNIKOV, Aleksandr Gavrilovich (30 August 1885–2 September 1937). Born in carpenter's family. Worked in factories from 1898. Joined RSDRP in 1901; Bolshevik from 1903. Arrested in 1905; beaten by Black Hundreds. In prison until January 1907. 1908–1914, worked in factories in France, Germany and England; fluent in French and German. In 1915, in CC. Member of Petrograd Committee of RSDRP, 1917–1918. People's Commissar of Labor in first Soviet government. In 1918–1919, candidate-member of CC. In RVS during Civil War. In 1920, worked in VTsSPS. In 1921–1922, member of CC. Opposed Trotsky during trade union debate. Headed Workers' Opposition with Kollontai, 1920–1922. In 1923, signed "Declaration of 46." Trade representative in France; returned to USSR in 1925. Supported Left Opposition, 1926–1929. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927 for Trotskyism. Broke with Opposition in 1929 and reinstated in party. From 1923–1931, published *The Year 1917* in four volumes. In Gosplan, 1931–1933. In 1933, expelled from party. Exiled to Karelia in 1934. In 1935, exiled to Astrakhan for five years for having belonged to Workers' Opposition. Arrested on 2 September 1936. Sentenced to death on 2 September 1937 and shot same day. Rehabilitated in 1963 and posthumously reinstated in party in 1988.

SHOLOKHOV, Mikhail Aleksandrovich (11 [24] May 1905–21 February 1984). Born in peasant family. Captured by Makhno in 1920 but released. Participated in "Molodaia gvardiia" [Young Guard] literary group. Famous for novel *Tikhii Don* [The Quiet Don], 1928–1940, about Cossacks during Civil War. Second novel, *Virgin Soil Uplifted*, 1932–1960, about collectivization among the Cossacks. Joined party in 1932. Protected by Stalin, especially in 1938 when NKVD sought his arrest. Won Stalin Prize in 1941. In 1965, received Nobel Prize for literature. Spoke against Sinyavsky and Daniel in 1966. Died from cancer in 1984.

SLEPKOV, Aleksandr Nikolaevich (1899–26 May 1937). Born in family of teacher. Member of party, 1919–1932. Journalist, historian, member of Right Opposition. Finished Sverdlov University in 1921, and Institute of Red Professors in 1924. From 1921, taught at the Communist University. Member of "Bukharin School." Editor at *Pravda* and the journal *Bolshevik*, 1924–1928. Expelled from party on 21 October 1930 "for right-opportunist mistakes." In March 1931, reinstated and teaches in Saratov. Expelled again in 1931, but reinstated in February 1932. Member of "Union of Marxist-Leninists." Arrested on 26 September 1932, sentenced to three years in exile on 11 October 1932. On 16 April 1933, sentenced by OGPU to five years in corrective labor camp. Arrested on 17 December 1936; shot on 26 May 1937. Rehabilitated in June 1988.



SLEPKOV, Vasily Nikolaevich (1902–1 August 1937). Born in Riazan. Joined party in 1919. Studied at IKP. Senior Research Scholar at the Moscow Zootechnical Institute. Author of *Biology and Marxism*, 1928. In December 1930 expelled from the party; in 1932 reinstated. In 1932, director of Biology Research Institute at Kazan University. Arrested on 16 February 1933. Expelled from the party. Sentenced on 16 April 1933 by a Collegium of the OGPU to three years in a political isolator. By decree of a Collegium of the OGPU on 13 June 1934, exiled to Ufa for the remainder of the sentence. In May 1936 arrived in Baku for permanent residence. Arrested on 14 January 1937. Sentenced on 1 August 1937 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. Shot on 1 August 1937. Buried at the Donskoy Cemetery. Rehabilitated on 24 December 1957 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR with regard to the sentence of 1937. Rehabilitated fully on 6 April 1989. Posthumously reinstated in the party on 9 August 1989 by the Party Control Commission of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

SMILGA, Ivar Tenisovich (19 November [2 December] 1892–10 January 1937). Born in family of Latvian forester. Father was shot in 1906 by Tsarist punitive expedition for participating in 1905 Revolution. Joined RSDRP in January 1907. Studied at Moscow State University, 1910–1911. Many arrests. Exiled to Siberia in 1915. Returned to Petrograd in March 1917; elected to CC and sent to Finland. Worked closely with Lenin. On 25 October 1917, brought troops to Petrograd from Finland. From 1918–1921, in Revvoensovet on Western, Southern, Kavkaz and Crimean fronts. From 1920, economic work. 1921–1923, in VSNKh. From 1923, deputy chairman of Gosplan. Director of Moscow Economic Institute, 1924–1927. Leading member of Left Opposition. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927. Arrested in 1928 and exiled for four years to Minusinsk. Broke with Opposition in 1929. Reinstated in party in 1930. Economic work in VSNKh and Gosplan. In 1933, editor at Academia publishing house. Arrested on 1 January 1935 and sentenced to five years in Verkhneural'sk political isolator. Sentenced to death on 10 January 1937 and shot same day. Rehabilitated in 1987.

SMIRNOV, Aleksandr Petrovich (27 August [9 September] 1877–10 February 1938). Born in peasant family. In strike at textile factory in 1896 in Tver; joined Union of Struggle for Emancipation of Working Class in 1896. Participated in Revolution of 1905. Arrested and exiled many times. Candidate member of CC in 1907 and 1912. 1922–1933, in CC. In 1924–1930, member of Orgburo. General secretary of Krestintern, 1923–1928. Secretary of CC, 1928–1930. In 1930–1933, candidate-member of Orgburo. In 1932, organized opposition group against Stalin. Expelled from party on 12 January 1933. Reinstated and then expelled again in December 1934. Arrested on 10 March 1937. Sentenced to death on 8 February 1938 and shot on 10 February. Rehabilitated in 1958.

SMIRNOV, Ivan Nikitich (1881–25 August 1936). Born in peasant family. Party member 1899–1927, 1930–1933. From 1893 worked on railway, then in factory in Moscow. Prior to 1917, arrested and exiled many times. Participated in armed uprising in Moscow in December 1905. In Tsarist army in 1916–1917. 1918–1919, member of Revolutionary Military Council on Eastern Front

and RMC of the Republic. From August 1919, chairman of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee. Member of CC, 1920–1921. From 1921, member of Petrograd Provincial Committee. July 1923–November 1927, People's Commissar of Post and Telegraph. In Left Opposition, 1926–1929. Signed "Declaration of 83" in May 1927. Arrested in November 1927, expelled from party on 18 December 1927 and on 31 December 1927, exiled for three years. Declared departure from Opposition on 27 October 1929. 1929–1932 headed Building Trust in Saratov. In 1931, returned to activity in Trotskyist opposition; organized underground group in 1932. Arrested on 1 January 1933 and sentenced to five years in prison. In prison from 1 January 1933–August 1936. Defendant at First Moscow Trial. On 24 August 1936, sentenced to be shot. Executed on 25 August 1936. Rehabilitated in 1988.

SMIRNOV, Vladimir Mikhailovich (1887–26 May 1937). In party from 1907. Studied economics at Moscow University. Editor on several newspapers. Member of "left communists," February–July 1918. In 1918, one of the leaders of the "military opposition." In Red Army, 1918–1920. Member of Gosplan, 1921–1926. In Left Opposition, 1925–1928. Signed "Declaration of 83" in May 1927. Expelled from party on 18 December 1927. Arrested in 1928, and exiled, 1928–1930. Arrested in 1930, imprisoned in Suzdal and Verkhneural'sk isolators, 1930–May 1937. On 26 May 1937, sentenced to death by Military Collegium of the Supreme Soviet, and shot on same day. Rehabilitated on 16 November 1960.

SOKOLNIKOV, Grigorii Yakovlevich [Brilliant] (3 [15] August 1888–21 May 1939). Born in physician's family. In RSDRP from 1905. Participated in 1905 Revolution, including armed uprising in Moscow. In fall of 1906, organized students in Moscow with Bukharin. Arrested in 1907. Sentenced to exile in 1909. Escaped abroad. Studied law and economics in Paris, 1909–1914. Mastered six languages. Belonged to Bolshevik groups in France, then Switzerland, 1914–1917. Returned with Lenin to Petrograd in 1917. Party work in Petrograd and Moscow 1917–1918. Signed Brest-Litovsk Treaty in 1918. Headed 9th Army in Civil War, 1918–1919. In CC, 1917–1919, 1922–1930; candidate-member of CC, 1930–1936. Candidate-member of Politburo, 1924–1925. Helped stabilize financial system 1921–1925. In Left Opposition, 1925–1926. Broke with Opposition in summer of 1927. Distanced himself from Right Opposition in 1928–1929. Ambassador to Britain, 1929–1932. From 1932, Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs. Arrested 26 July 1936. Defendant at Second Moscow Trial. Sentenced to ten years in prison on 30 January 1937. Murdered by NKVD on 21 May 1939 in Verkhneural'sk political isolator. Rehabilitated in 1988.

SOSNOVSKY, Lev Semyonovich (1886–3 July 1937). Born in soldier's family. In party from 1903. Party work in Ekaterinburg, Zlatoust. In Paris, Geneva, Vienna, 1906. Party work in Tashkent, Orenburg, Baku. In Moscow, 1908–1909; arrested in 1909. 1913–1916, wrote for *Pravda*. In 1916, exiled to Chelyabinsk. Revolutionary activity in Ekaterinburg in 1917. After revolution, many party posts in VTsIK, in CC, in Kharkov, CCC. Worked as journalist for several papers; 1918–1924, *Bednota* [Village Poor]. Signed "Declaration of 46" in October 1923; one of

leaders of Left Opposition; expelled from party in December 1927. In exile in Barnaul, 1928–1929. Arrested on 29 April 1929 and sentenced to three years in prison in Chelyabinsk, then Tomsk political isolators. Renounced opposition in 1934, returned to Moscow. Reinstated in party in 1935. Arrested on 23 October 1936. Sentenced to death on 3 July 1937 and shot the same day. Rehabilitated on 26 June 1958.

STEN, Yan Ernestovich (1899–20 June 1937). Born in the Vendenskii area of the Lifliand Province. Participated in revolutionary movement in Latvia. Studied at IKP, 1921–1924. Worked for Comintern, 1924–1927. Specialist in dialectics, epistemology, and social philosophy. On editorial board of *Under the Banner of Marxism*. Leading Deborinist. Full member of the Institute of Philosophy. Deputy director of Marx-Engels Institute, 1928–1930. Helped write the “Riutin Program”; expelled from party in 1932 for circulating it. In 1932 exiled for two years to Akmolinsk by decree of the Collegium of the OGPU. Upon return, worked on editorial board of *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. Rearrested on 3 August 1936. Sentenced on 19 June 1937 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. Shot on 20 June 1937. Buried at the Donskoy Cemetery. Rehabilitated on 7 July 1956 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR.

SUKHANOV, Nikolai Nikolaevich [Gimmer] (27 November [9 December] 1882–29 June 1940). Born in family of railway official in Moscow. Studied in Paris for a year and returned to Moscow in 1903. Joined SRs. Imprisoned in 1904, freed in October 1905. Participated in armed uprising in Moscow in December 1905. Fled to Switzerland and broke with SRs. Entered Moscow University in 1909. Exiled in 1910 for three years to Arkhangelsk. Literary and political activity in Petersburg and Moscow. In 1917, joined Menshevik-Internationalists. An editor of *Novaia zhizn*; critical of both Provisional Government and Bolsheviks. After October 1917, in VTsIk until June 1918. Broke with Mensheviks at beginning of NEP. Worked as economist, specialist in agriculture. Member of Communist Academy. Condemned Stalin’s collectivization. Arrested in July 1930. At trial of the “Union Bureau of the CC of Mensheviks,” March 1931, sentenced to ten years in prison. Served sentence in Verkhneuralsk political isolator. In March 1935, exiled to Tobolsk; worked as economist. Arrested on 19 September 1937; confessed under torture in November 1938 to being German spy. On 29 June 1940, sentenced to death and shot on the same day in Omsk. Posthumously rehabilitated. Author of seven-volume *Notes of the Revolution*, 1922–1923.

SYRTSOV, Sergei Ivanovich (5 [17] July 1893–10 September 1937). Born in merchant family. Bolshevik from 1913. Arrest and exile. Returns to Petrograd after February Revolution. Leading party work in Rostov-na-Donu. During Civil War, Military Commissar of 12th Army. In 1920–1921, secretary of City Committee in Odessa. Participates in suppression of Kronstadt rebellion in 1921. Member of presidium of Communist Academy. 1926–1929, secretary of Siberian Kraikom. Supports Bukharin’s policies. Member of CC, 1927–1930. Candidate-member of politburo, 1919–1930. From May 1929, chairman of Sovnarkom RSFSR. Opposes Stalin from

1929; joins with Lominadze to call for Stalin's removal as General Secretary at party plenum. In 1930, removed from CC and sent on party work to Siberia. From 1931, economic work. Arrested in 1937 by NKVD. Sentenced to death on 10 September 1937 and shot on same day. Rehabilitated in 1957 and 1959.

TARKHANOV, Oskar Sergeevich [Sergei Petrovich Razumov] (18 [31] July 1901–8 February 1938). Born in engineer's family in Odessa. During Civil War, leader of Komsomol underground in Crimea. 1921–1922, secretary of CC of Komsomol. One of founders of "Young Guard" publishing house. 1924–1926, member of Executive Committee of KIM [Communist Youth International]. 1926–1927, political adviser in China. In 1928, expelled from party as Zinovievist and exiled to Arkhangelsk. Reinstated in party; worked in Kazan. In 1930–1932, studied at Institute of Red Professors. In 1932–1935, intelligence work in Khabarovsk. In 1935–1937, diplomatic work in Mongolia. Arrested in 1937 and shot in 1938. Rehabilitated in 1956.

TEODOROVICH, Ivan Adolfovich (29 August [10 September] 1875–20 September 1937). Born in family of Polish noble. Entered Moscow University in 1894. From 1895, in Social-Democratic movement, member of Workers' Union in Moscow. In 1902, Moscow Committee of RSDRP. Exiled for six years in 1902. Escaped to Switzerland in 1905. Returned to Russia in October 1905, member of Petersburg Committee of the RSDRP. Arrested in Urals in 1908. Candidate-member of CC in 1917. In partisan movement against Kolchak, 1919–1920. Deputy People's Commissar of Agriculture 1922–1928. In 1928–1930, general secretary of Krestintern. For supporting Kondratiev, removed from posts and made editor of journals of the Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles. 1929–1935, editor of *Katorga i ssylka* [Hard Labor and Exile]. Arrested on 11 June 1937. Sentenced to death on 20 September 1937 and shot on same day. Rehabilitated in 1956.

TER-VAGANIAN, Vagarshak Arutiunovich (1893–1936). First chief editor of *Under the Banner of Marxism*. Leading Left Oppositionist from 1923 through 1927. Expert on Plekhanov and author of one of the first biographies about him. Founded the journal *Militant Materialist*. Exiled to Biisk in 1928. Arrested on 14 March 1935. Sentenced on 26 May 1935 by a Special Board of the OGPU to five years exile in Turgai, then Semipalatinsk. Defendant at the First Moscow Trial (sixteen defendants, including Zinoviev, Kamenev, and I. N. Smirnov). Sentenced on 24 August 1936 by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR and shot on 25 August 1936. Buried at the Donskoy cemetery. Rehabilitated on 13 July 1988 by the Supreme Court of the USSR.

TOGLIATTI, Palmiro (26 March 1893–21 August 1964). From 1927 until his death, general secretary of Italian Communist Party; from 1928, member of Presidium. 1935–1943, member of Secretariat of ECCI. 1944–1945, Deputy Prime Minister. Died from a stroke in Yalta in 1964.

TOMSKY [Efremov], Mikhail Pavlovich (1880–22 August 1936). Born in working-class family. Joined party in 1904. Arrested and exiled for revolutionary activity. Member of Politburo, 1922–1930. Member of CC, 1919–1934. Headed VTsSPS, 1918–1919, 1922–1929; member of



VTsIK, 1920–1931. Deputy Chairman of VSNKh, 1929–1932; chairman of Chemical Industry, 1932–1936. Headed OGIz, 1932–1936. In “troika” with Bukharin and Rykov as leaders of Right Opposition. Committed suicide on 22 August 1936. Rehabilitated on 21 June 1988.

UGLANOV, Nikolai Aleksandrovich (5 [17] December 1886–31 May 1937). Born in peasant family. Participated in Revolution of 1905. Became Bolshevik in 1907. Military service, 1908–1911. Trade union work in Petrograd, 1911–1914. In army, 1914–1916. Badly wounded in November 1914. Participated in February and October Revolutions. 1921–1922, candidate-member of CC; 1923–1930, member of CC. From 20 August 1924 to 29 April 1929, secretary of CC. In Orgburo, 1924–1929. With Riutin, led fight against Left Opposition in Moscow. 1928–1929, in Right Opposition. In 1932, supported Union of Marxist-Leninists. Expelled from party. In March 1933, arrested in connection with Bukharin school. In 1934, reinstated in party. On 23 August 1936, expelled from party and arrested. On 31 May 1937 sentenced to death and shot on same day. Rehabilitated in 1989.

ULYANOVA, Mariya Ilyinichna (6 [18] February 1878–12 June 1937). Vladimir Lenin’s younger sister. Finished gymnasium in Moscow; participated in student movement. In party from 1898. At University of Brussels 1898–1899. Party work in Novgorod, Moscow, Kiev, Saratov and Petersburg. In Geneva 1904–1905. In Moscow 1910. Arrested in 1911 and in exile 1912–1914. From March 1917 to 1929 member of editorial board of *Pravda*. Worked closely with Bukharin. From 1929, prepared correspondence and material about Lenin at Lenin Institute. From 1932, member of CCC. Delegate to many party congresses. Buried on Red Square in Moscow.

VALENTINOV [Abramson], Grigory Borisovich (1896–? [no sooner than 1956]). Born in family of a tailor. In party from 1915. In army until 1917. In Red Army 1918–1920. Deputy editor of the newspaper *Trud*, 1922–January 1927; active in Left Opposition 1923–1929; one of authors of “Platform of the 13”; signed “Platform of the 83” in May 1927; main editor of *Trud* 1927, then deputy editor in 1928. Expelled from party as Trotskyist on 26 August 1927; expelled by CCC on 9 November 1927; departed from Left Opposition in July 1929. Reinstated in party on 21 March 1930. Sentenced by NKVD in 1936 to five years in prison, and completes sentence. Kept in exile. On 19 June 1946 sentenced to ten more years in prison, then extended to twenty-five years in prison on 25 June 1949. Released on 27 June 1956.

VAREIKIS, Iosif Mikhailovich (6 [18] October 1894 –29 July 1938). Member of Bolshevik Party from 1913. Secretary of Donetsk oblast committee in Kharkov in 1918. 1924–26, head of press department of Central Committee. Candidate member of CC, 1924–1930. Member of CC, 1930–1937. Carried out purges in Far East in 1937. Deported Koreans to Central Asia. Arrested 9–10 October 1937 in Moscow. Shot on 29 July 1938 at the NKVD firing range “Kommunarka” in Moscow.

VARGA, Eugen Samuilovich [Jenő Weisz] (1879–1964). Born in Budapest. Finished economic studies at Budapest University in 1909. In Social-Democratic movement in Austria-Hungary and Germany. In 1919, People’s Commissar of Finance in short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic.

Emigrated to Soviet Union. Joined party in 1920. Active in Comintern. 1927–1947, Director of Institute of World Economy and World Politics in Moscow. Member of Presidium of Academy of Sciences. In disfavor from 1947; his institute was closed. After Stalin's death, signed "Letter of the 300" in 1955, criticizing Lysenkoism. From 1956, worked at Institute of World Economy and International Relations. A posthumous work criticizing the Soviet economic system was published in 1989.

VORONSKY, Aleksandr Konstantinovich (19 August 1884–13 August 1937). Born in family of village priest in Tambov. Studied at seminary. Joined RSDRP in 1904. Illegal work in Petersburg, including at Putilov works. Participated in Sveaborg uprising in 1906. Exiled for two years in Vologda. Party work in Vladimir, Moscow, Ekaterinoslav. Delegate to Sixth Prague Conference in 1912; arrested in Saratov, six months in prison. Exiled to north. Leading party work in Odessa, 1917–1918; in Ivanovo 1918–1921, editor of newspaper *Rabochii krai*. Participated in suppression of Kronstadt uprising. Editor of major literary journal *Krasnaia nov'*, 1921–1927. Author of many works of literary criticism. Worked at Gosizdat, 1922. Member of Society of Old Bolsheviks from 1923. In Left Opposition, 1923–1929. Expelled from party in 1929 for Trotskyism. Arrested by OGPU in 1929, exiled to Lipetsk, 1929–1930. Departed from Opposition in 1930; editor at "Khudlit," 1930–1935. Arrested 1 February 1937. Sentenced to death on 13 August 1937 and shot same day. Rehabilitated 7 February 1957. Personally close to Lenin, Mariya Ulyanova, Trotsky, Serebriakov, Frunze, Goloshchekin.

VOROSHILOV, Kliment Efremovich (23 January [4 February] 1881–2 December 1969). Born in family of railway worker. Member of RSDRP from 1903. 1908–1917, party work in Baku, Petrograd, Tsaritsyn. Arrested many times and exiled. From 1918, military work. From November 1925–June 1934, Chairman of Revolutionary Military Council. 1934–1940, People's Commissar of Defense. Member of CC, 1921–1961, 1966–1969. Member of Politburo, 1926–1952. Fervent Stalinist. One of main organizers of Great Terror, signing shooting lists of thousands of party, soviet and military figures. Many high posts after the war.

YAGODA, Genrikh Grigorievich (7 [19] November 1891–15 March 1938). Born in printer's family. 1907–1911, anarchist. In exile 1912–1913. At Putilov factory in 1913. In army, 1915–1916. Joined party in summer 1917. In Cheka, GPU, OGPU, NKVD; People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, 1934–1936. Candidate-member of CC, 1930–1934; full member 1934–1936. One of early organizers of Great Terror, including First Moscow Trial. In January 1937, expelled from party. Arrested on 28 March 1937. Defendant at Third Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 13 March and shot on 15 March 1938. Not rehabilitated.

YAKOVLEV, Yakov Arkadievich [Epshtein](21 June 1896–29 July 1938). Born in Grodno in family of teacher. Member of party from 1913. Studied at Petrograd Polytechnic Institute. 1918–1920 CC in Ukraine. From 1921, party work in Moscow. 1924–1930, in CCC. From 1926, chairman of RKI. From 8 December 1929–1934, People's Commissar of Agriculture. From July 1930, member of CC. Organized collectivization. From 1931, head of Kolkhoz Center. The famine of

1932–1933 occurred under his leadership. In 1936–1937, deputy chairman of CCC. Arrested on 12 October 1937 and shot on 29 July 1938. Rehabilitated in 1957.

YAROSLAVSKY, Emelian Mikhailovich [Gubelman] (19 February [3 March] 1878–4 December 1943). Born in Chita. Joined RSDRP in 1898. In 1901, abroad as *Iskra* correspondent. 1903, Petersburg Committee of RSDRP. Participated in Revolution of 1905. In 1907, arrested and exiled. From July 1917, in Moscow. In 1918, Left Communist. 1919–1921, candidate member of CC; 1921–1923, member of CC. In Orgburo. Editor for *Pravda*, *Bolshevik*, *Istoriik-Marksist* and *Bezbozhnik* [Atheist]. 1923–1934, in CCC. Candidate-member of ECCI. 1934–1939, Commission of Party Control. 1939–1943, member of CC. Opponent of Left Opposition. From the early 1930s, one of most servile supporters of Stalin and major falsifier of party history. Author of many works on atheism and religion. Died from stomach cancer on 4 December 1943.

YEZHOV, Nikolai Ivanovich (19 April [1 May] 1895–4 February 1940). In Red Army, 1919. Many party positions, from 1922. 1934–1935, deputy chairman of Party Control Commission; in 1935–1939, secretary of CC; 1935–1939, chairman of Party Control Commission. In 1936–1938, People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, replacing Yagoda. Organized Great Terror, in which 1.5 million arrested, about half of whom were shot, including 14,000 in NKVD (the secret police). Arrested on 10 April 1939. Sentenced to death on 3 February 1940, shot the next day. Rehabilitation refused in 1988 by Soviet Supreme Court.

YUROVSKY, Leonid Naumovich (24 October 1884–17 September 1938). Born in merchant family in Odessa. Studied at St. Petersburg Polytechnical Institute. Studied at Berlin University in 1905, then in Munich. Defended dissertation in 1910 at Munich University. Worked at Moscow newspaper *Russkie vedomosti*, 1907–1918. In fall 1921, at Central Statistic Bureau in Moscow. Specialist on monetary reform. Author of many works on economy. In February 1926, in Narkomfin, although not in party. In 1930, arrested in case of the “Working Peasants’ Party.” In 1932, sentenced to eight years in prison in Suzdal political isolator. Freed in 1934 due to illness. Arrested on 27 December 1937. Sentenced to death on 17 September 1938 and shot same day at “Kommunarka.” Rehabilitated on 1 June 1963.

ZINOVIEV, Grigory Evseevich [Radomyslsky] (20 September 1883–25 August 1936). Born in family of dairy farmer. In RSDRP from 1901. Emigrated to Berlin in 1902, then Paris and Bern in 1903, where he met Lenin. Bolshevik from 1903. 1904, Bern University. Participated in 1905 Revolution in Petersburg. Back and forth between Russia and Europe. In CC from 1907. Returned on same train with Lenin to Petrograd on 3 April 1917. Opposed armed uprising on 10 [23]October. After October, many leading party positions, including head of party in Petrograd. Chairman of Ispolkom of Comintern, 1919–1926. In 1921–1926, member of Politburo. Along with Kamenev, supported Stalin during struggle against Trotsky in 1922–1924. Joined United Opposition in April 1926. Removed from Ispolkom of the Comintern and Politburo. In 1927, expelled from CC, then from party and sent into exile. Capitulated to Stalin, departed from Opposition. In 1928, appointed rector of Kazan University. In October 1932, expelled from

party, arrested and sentenced to four years exile. In 1933 reinstated in party. In April-July 1934, on editorial board of journal *Bolshevik*. On 16 December 1934, arrested, expelled from party and sentenced to ten years in prison. In Verkhneuralsk political isolator. Defendant at First Moscow Trial. Sentenced to death on 24 August 1936 and shot on 26 August. Rehabilitated on 13 July 1988.

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<sup>1</sup>. The information in these notes comes from a variety of sources. For members of the oppositions: *Izvestiia TsK KPSS*, 1989–1991; *Reabilitatsiia. Kak eto bylo*, vol. 1–3, Moskva : Mezhdunarodnyi fond “Demokratiia,” 2000–2004; K. V. Skorkin, *Obrechny proigrat’*, (*Vlast’ i oppozitsiia 1922–1934*), M.: VividArt, 2011; *Politbiuro i Lev Trotskii. 1922–1940*, M.: Izd. “Istoricheskaiia literatura,” 2017. For philosophers: S. N. Korsakov, “Stanovlenie Instituta filosofii i sud’by filosofov pri stalinskom rezhime [Founding of the Institute of Philosophy and the Fate of Philosophers under the Stalinist Regime],” in: *Nash filosofskii dom* [Our House of Philosophy], Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2009, pp. 95–195; Ibid., “Repressirovannye sotrudniki Instituta filosofii [Victims from the Institute of Philosophy],” pp. 508–522; and *Filosofy Rossii XIX–XX stoletii (biografii, idei, trudy)*, edited by P. V. Alekseev, Moskva: “Kniga i biznes,” 1993. Whenever possible, information taken from the Russian version of *Wikipedia* has been checked against these and other sources.